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The SMART SET

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Issued Monthly by Smart Set Company, Inc., 25 West 45th Street, New York

Entered as second class mail matter, March 27, 1900, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under act of March 3, 1879
Eltinge F. Warner, Pres. and Treas. George Jean Nathan, Sec.

Western Advertising Office, Wrigley Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

Unity

By John Hall Wheelock

DAY breaks, and the old drama
Repeats itself anew—
The hind wakes to be hunted,
The huntsman to pursue—

The lover and the beloved,
Each one doomed to his part,
The victor and the vanquished,
The hushed and the hurrying heart—

In terror and in triumph
They play it through again,
The old, unchanging drama
Of passion and of pain.

As the great Will has willed it,
That, in all forms being cast,
Wars on itself forever.
O may they at the last:—

The falcon and the fledgeling
He stoops to from the sky,
The lips that follow after,
The lips that would deny,

When the old war is ended,
When the stern Will is done,
Meet in eternal pity
And know themselves as one!



The SMART SET

The
Aristocrat
Among
Magazines



Mountebanks, Crickets and My Heart

By John Hanlon

I

YOU are a mountebank; I am a puritan. Your life is vermillion; mine is gray. Your lips frame swaying waltzes; mine chant stern psalms. You act and speak as your heart prompts you; I am cramped by the cruel corset of the will of my ancestors. To you what people think is a feather; to me a sword. I am a puritan; you are a mountebank—yet we are friends. The world wonders what we have in common. Perhaps it is because we each understand that we are both pretending.

II

THE leaves grow crimson, golden, fall in fanciful eddies. Each morning fewer flowers gladden the garden than yesterday. Yet the crickets are singing.

Singing, singing, singing in the grass among the ashes of the roses. They will never know another spring and yet they sing, stronger, more gaily, under the sun, under the stars, as the hours drag on toward death . . . Since you grew weary of me my heart has been like the crickets. It will never know another spring; but the crickets are more fortunate, singing, singing in the grass among the dead rose petals. Long ago my heart forgot its song.

III

My books used to be my lovers and often I grew weary before the tale was ended and threw the volume away. Then one day you came and began to read my heart, but you would not wait for the ending of its story. I do not read my books any longer; I only look at the sky and wonder at its grayness.



Recipé for Greatness

By *W. L. Warren*

FOLLOW the pack. Mix with the herd; chaff them; give them a lift; sing 'em a song. Obey the laws. But walk fast, a little faster than the rest. In time you will arrive near the head of the procession. Snarl at the leaders; snap at their heels; curse them; until you wear them down and they fall by the way, leaving you first.

Then turn on the pack. Disregard their conventions; their traditions, their laws, their religion. Do the thing you desire, the sensible thing. This is essential. Any other course than treason to

your followers is impossible. If you are true to them and follow their wishes, you will become popular and waste your time in making speeches, signing autographs, and shaking hands; after a few years the crowd will tire of you and cast you aside and forget you.

So turn on the pack; that way lies greatness. Perhaps the herd will accept you and follow you. In that case you will be elected president of something or other. Perhaps the herd will reject you and hiss you and stone you to death. In that case you will be worshipped as a martyr.



An Ass Complains

By *Paul Eldridge*

I POUR my very soul
Into my braying,—
Why does the world laugh?



ELECTION—Something which decides whether the coming graft investigating committee will be Democratic or Republican.



Other Good Fish

[A Complete Novelette]

By Thyra Samter Winslow

CHAPTER I

ON her twenty-fourth birthday anniversary, Millie Barnes decided that it was time she got married. Not of course that Millie had been devoid of nubile fancies up to that time. Since she was eighteen—Millie had developed late—she had weighed every man with whom she came into contact on the scales of hymeneal possibilities. But she had been passively inactive, expectant. Millie had been a bit of an idealist, if ideals existed in Burke Center, Missouri. She did not believe definitely that Her Hero, the modern counterpart of the youth in shining mail on a white charger, would spring miraculously from the feature film which she saw every week at the Burke Center Palace of Pictures. She knew that John Barrymore was married, that Wallace Reid was married, that Douglas Fairbanks and Crane Wilbur were married—all that. But she did believe, in an indefinite, trusting sort of way, that, if you waited, "Mr. Right" would come along and marry you.

On the anniversary of her twenty-fourth birthday Millie Barnes changed some of her thoughts about marriage. Her birthday was in May. It happened on that evening that Millie went to a dance at the Elks' Club with Lucius Miller and at the dance Margaret Phillips announced her engagement to Morris Henderson. Now Morris Henderson was rich and sought-after, one of the catches of the town. And Margaret, with neither beauty nor family, had captured him. Millie, who had watched

Margaret the past year, knew that schemes had taken the place of fate, that plans had superseded romance.

Going home that night, Millie voiced her suspicions to Lucius. He was a thin, rat-faced youth, whose acceptance into Burke Center's exclusive set was due to his father's wholesale grocery business.

"I don't believe," said Millie, "that most marriages are based on love. I think a girl just makes up her mind she'll marry a fellow and then goes about doing it. That's why some girls marry so well." It was stated before that Millie developed late.

"Oh, don't say that. That's real cynical, that is," said Lucius. "Why, just look around you. If a fellow and a girl get thrown together and start loving each other they get married. That's all there is to it. Some do better than others, of course. Naturally. But as for Margaret and Morris, you're wrong if you mean them. I heard him say he was simply gone on Margaret. Why, he's been talking of nothing else but her for weeks now. If you mean—"

No use talking to Lucius. Lucius was a simple fellow, good enough to go to dances with, once in a while. More than that—

After she had told Lucius good-night, Millie thought it over. Other women she knew had planned their own marriages. It came to her that she had known it all the time. Why, a girl just picks out the man she wants—and marries him. She doesn't propose, of course. That would frighten any man. Millie knew enough for that. If she

wanted a man to take her to a dance she knew better than to ask him to—but she usually could get him to take her. Marriage was the same thing, of course. Here she'd been waiting—waiting—and she was twenty-four. Half of the girls she knew were married already. There was a bridge club composed of just girls who had married within a year or two and the Burke Center *Journal* spoke of it as the Younger Married Set. Here she was, still single.

She'd have to marry someone in Burke Center, of course. Or someone who came there. Few strangers ever came. You couldn't bank on that. There was no money for a trip in search of an eligible. Millie was certain of that. If she could go to a city, St. Louis or Kansas City or Chicago, or a summer resort—but that was more than she could hope for. Still, there were a lot of men in Burke Center.

It wasn't as if she weren't popular. Millie knew she was. Each time she thought of her popularity she felt a flash of happiness. She knew she had risen above her family. She knew Burke Center. She knew she had done very well—something few others had done.

Millie's father worked at the Donovan Brick Yards. To be sure he worked in the Offices, which was distinctly above being in the Yards. But, socially, in Burke Center, it was rather low. Barnes was a little, bent, eager old man, who trembled slightly if you spoke to him suddenly and who looked ten years older than he really was; a patient little fellow, always trying to do the right thing, to get out of the way, to fit in unnoticeably, not to make errors. His hair was an indifferent mouse-like gray, his mustache was heavy and gray and drooping, his shoulders rounded. Millie's mother was a large woman with thin brown hair which she pulled tightly away from her round, rather red face. She dressed slightly in the fashion but no matter what she wore, she seemed to make a caricature of the style. Her ankles and legs were large but her feet were small and, as she affected rather

high-heeled shoes, she seemed always to be teetering uncertainly on a too-small foundation. She spoke in a harsh, rather loud voice and burst into laughter suddenly, the expression on her face not successfully mirroring her glee. After she'd stopped guffawing, her inquiring, rather vacant face seemed to deny that she had been amused at all.

Millie was the youngest of a family of four. Mary, the oldest daughter, had married, a number of years before, and was living contentedly in Miller Springs, the wife of a dapper little shoe clerk. She came home at intervals, accompanied by sticky and annoying offspring, and Millie was always miserable while she was there. The children were always getting into her room and touching the things on her dressing-table or coming into the living-room when she had company.

Next to Mary came James, also married. James lived in Burke Center. He had some sort of a railroad job. He and his wife, whose name was Estelle, lived in a new and hideous cottage of American and box-like architecture, in a new section of town, treeless, stark, made up exclusively of dozens of similar little box-like houses, some too flat and of one story, called bungalows, and others of more stories and pretensions, called Colonial houses, all painted white or yellow or dark red, with shingle roofs of red or green. All of the houses had small, ineffectual porches on which the sun or rain was usually beating. Millie was ashamed of James' home and its location. She was ashamed to be seen going to see him. As she had nothing to say to either James or Estelle, she seldom went there. James, his wife and his only child, Junior, always took dinner with his parents on Sunday. Junior's forehead was too pronounced for beauty or eugenics. He was a sulen boy, but Millie liked him because he sat still during his visits and didn't touch things or ask questions.

The daughter just older than Millie—though there was four years between them—Ray, was a widow and lived at home. She had married a meek young

fellow who played the organ at the Methodist church and he had died a year after their marriage, leaving, considerably, a small life insurance, enough to buy Ray's clothes and an occasional luxury. Ray was not strong and didn't go "out" much. She was content to help her mother with the housework. She liked to talk about the time when she was young and about the year of her marriage.

When Millie realized that, in spite of the handicap of poverty and family, she had risen to be one of the most popular members of the Society Set of Burke Center, she felt that she had a right to be proud of her success. Most of those in the set had parents who were prominent. The parents might be in trade, of course—such distinctions had not come to Burke Center—but they were in wholesale trade, mostly, though Bill Hillmer's father owned the New York Emporium, the dry goods store which everyone said was just as good as a city department store—you could find there everything you wanted. Future inheritors of wholesale hardware concerns and mills were included in the Society Set, as were also the daughters and sons of the city's lawyers and doctors and the younger lawyers and doctors themselves. Even Eva Claton, the mayor's daughter, wasn't as popular as Millie.

Perhaps Millie knew that the society of Burke Center wasn't exactly the same as the society of—well, New York, say. Still, she wasn't quite sure. Hadn't Mr. and Mrs. Humphrey Mallock of Burke Center gone to New York and didn't they write and say they had been immediately received by New York's most exclusive circle? Didn't they send clippings out of the *New York Journal* to prove it? They entertained at dinners and were entertained quite as they had been in Burke Center. Why not? Wasn't Mrs. Mallock beautiful and elegant and didn't Mr. Mallock have a perfectly gorgeous position in New York—some said he made as much as twelve thousand a year. Millie didn't care about all that. But to

belong to Burke Center's Society Set and having Mrs. Mallock in New York society gave her a thread of connection with New York society itself. It was a comforting thought.

Of course all of Burke Center society wasn't like the Mallocks. There were the Batsons, a fine old family, and yet the younger Batson boy was, well, rather simple—couldn't answer questions. But Millie knew old families often had members like that. There were the Kramers and the Harringtons—Mrs. Harrington had had a scandal about her before her marriage. What of it? Wasn't she one of the leaders in Burke Center Society now? The scandal only added to her position, if anything.

Millie, all by herself, had got where she was. None of her family had been able to help her at all. She had been fastidious even when a little girl. It had started when she first went to school, she remembered. She had picked out the girls she had liked best, and when they saw she was always smiling and pretty and agreeable they had liked to play with her. The girls had liked her a lot when she was little. She remembered still how she had never let anyone see that her feelings were hurt when she was slighted, how she had always done favors for the girls and smiled and flattered them. The girls didn't like her as much now, but Millie knew it was because they were jealous because the boys liked her. In Grade School she had been a member of the "D.C.G.'s," a club of twelve little girls, whose families, excepting Millie's, had been rich or prominent. She had laughed patronizingly at other little girls not honored by "D.C.G." membership and had giggled and nudged at all "D.C.G." secrets and intimate jokes.

Later had come dancing school. Millie went, though Ray had not had this opportunity. Still, she was the youngest—they could afford it and all of her crowd went. Why not? Millie learned to dance and, because she was light and graceful and saucy, never lacked partners. The boys she had played with

at school became her dancing partners. All through high school—Millie was the only one of her family who had enjoyed this branch of higher education—she went to Friday night dances, dinners and movie shows. She even returned social favors, in a way. That is, some of "the crowd" would come in on a Friday night when there wasn't a party and Millie would beg her father to stay out in the kitchen and instruct her mother as to what to do: "Now, mamma, just come in for a little while and say 'How do you do' or something like that. Don't laugh all the time. If James and Estelle walk by, after the movies, for Heaven's sake keep them in the dining-room or the kitchen."

After high school, most of Millie's crowd went away to the state university or second-rate schools which sent out elaborately illustrated catalogues to attract the socially elect of each mid-West hamlet. Millie had sent for the catalogues. Finally, she had a whole drawer full of them and weighed attractions with Irma Martin or Dora Ellis, when they spent the night together. The Misses Hawkins School offered horse-back riding and the girls lived together in sorority houses, but the state university had real national sororities and of course if you belonged to "the crowd" in Burke Center you'd be asked to join one. At the state university there were boys, too, to take you places. Still, the Chateau Seminary was right near one of the largest men's colleges. Oh, well, you had to miss something, no matter where you went. Millie never considered going away to school very seriously. She knew her people could not afford to send her and, after all, she was tired of school. She had never understood just what algebra or geometry were about and had practically failed in Latin, being graduated by the narrowest margin.

Even with most of her friends away, Millie had had a mighty good time the first year she was out of school. She was eighteen, then, and pretty. She had light brown hair with a natural wave to it and eyes a trifle too blue and round

but quite satisfactory to the beauty critics of Burke Center. She was rather short but had a neat little figure, smooth complexion and plump neck and arms which she usually managed to show. She had natural high coloring and blushed easily. She always called attention to her blushes as if they were a great joke, contrasting her rosininess with more fortunate girls who were able to apply artificial enhancements. She giggled easily but had a pleasant manner and a voice unnoticeable for either expression or harshness.

That first year out of school the boys of the crowd who were at home dropped into the habit of taking Millie places, the occasional theatrical attraction, the movies, and, gradually, to the dances of the older set, the real Society Set of Burke Center, to which, mostly on account of age, Millie had not yet aspired.

She did not make a *début*, of course. She just started going to dances. The older men found her as pleasant to dance with and as fresh and pleasant smelling as the younger men had. She was graceful and supple and yielding. The "society girls," as Millie had called them, paid little attention to her, speaking pleasantly when they thought of it but usually ignoring her altogether. She didn't care. She felt she had very little need of women.

One year away at school usually sufficed all but the most mentally advanced of Burke Center's population. When Millie's crowd came home they found her already in the Society Set and took it as a matter of course. There were some others whose background, while not as humble, was as uncertain as Millie's. As long as she was pleasant and agreeable and popular no one thought of objecting to her.

One at a time, the second winter after she had left school, Millie's girl friends made their *débuts*. She was sometimes asked to "stand in line" at these affairs, an honor mentioned each time in the Burke Center *Journal*. Millie felt it was no more than her just due. Why not? Wasn't she as popular as any of

them? Indeed she was. She always had half of her dances taken a week before any of the big dances and the rest of her program filled five minutes after she arrived. She had learned long ago how to avoid undesirables, men of no consequence—poor dancers.

Three years more slipped by, then. They were pleasant years of parties and dances and the theater in winter, picnics and outings and dances at the Country Club in summer. If there were homes which ignored her existence, she felt she ignored them equally. If parties of "just girls" got along without her presence she felt more of a relief than a slight. She didn't know what to say to women, anyhow, excepting the girls she had been brought up with.

If women paid less attention to Millie, men didn't. Nearly every evening she had an engagement. Men would meet her downtown and be glad of an excuse to walk home with her. She always had escorts for everything. But that was all. She was popular but not permanently desirable. The eligible young men of Burke Center liked Millie, danced with her, brought her candy and music—and then picked out some other girl to marry. None of them wanted to marry Millie. Millie knew that. But she knew she had not tried, had made no real effort toward matrimony.

Millie was twenty-four. She felt that she had been in the unmarried set long enough. It was time for marriage.

CHAPTER II

MARGARET and Morris' engagement set Millie thinking. After Lucius left, the night of her birthday, she undressed slowly, putting away her thin dancing frock very carefully. It wasn't soiled; just a little pressing and it would be ready to wear again. She was glad she was handy about clothes. Some girls couldn't sew or fix things and always looked a perfect fright.

She looked at herself in the mirror of her bird's-eye maple dressing table.

Bird's-eye maple was not only permissible but quite usual in Burke Center. She was pretty—and didn't look over twenty. She felt that. Her mouth was full and red, her color high, though not as high as it had been when she was eighteen, and some nights when she was tired she had to resort to the rouge she had sneered at a few years before.

She was as pretty as any other girl in town, though. She felt that, too. Little Helen Jefferson was a beauty but, why she wasn't more than eighteen, just out of high school, not a rival in any way. No, there wasn't a girl at the Elks' Club dances who got her program filled quicker than Millie, a girl who got more automobile rides or boxes of candy. There was no reason why she couldn't marry whenever she wanted to—and get the best catch in Burke Center, at that. Wasn't she worth it? She decided she was.

She was glad her home wasn't so bad looking. Of course it wasn't a big place, like the houses out on the Rock Road, great places with gardens and broad halls and stairways. If she'd ever have a house like that she'd know how to furnish it. She'd get furniture out of some magazine like *The House Beautiful*, no old stuff like the Ritters had. She would have oriental rugs and mahogany and velvet hangings. Well, it was more than merely possible. Rock Road wasn't at all out of the question.

Millie lived in a small white cottage, but it was in a good neighborhood, and she felt it was all right for any kind of company. It wasn't as if she lived out in Avelon Addition, where James and Estelle lived. No one ever lived out there but the most ordinary people—people who didn't amount to anything socially—people she didn't know. Some of them had gone to school with her but never had been in her social set.

Her father had been wise when he bought the house in Oak Street. It had been years ago and of course he hadn't known that Oak Street was going to be one of the nicest of the old streets. Now it had a new coat of white paint and didn't look half bad. It had just

been luck—but then Millie felt that she was pretty lucky about things.

Inside the house, now that Ray had come home with her furniture, and her mother had got rid of some of the old stuff, it was quite nice. Millie had made some old-rose lamp shades with fringe on them and bought new cretonne curtains and a couple of wicker chairs. Now that the family was fully trained about staying out of the living-room when she had company, it was quite a good place in which to entertain callers.

As Millie braided her hair and put on her cheap muslin nightgown—she had one *crêpe de chine* gown which she kept for when she was invited to week-end parties or when one of the girls happened to stay all night with her—she pretended to weigh the men of Burke Center, to consider which was really the best catch in town. But she knew she really wasn't doing it. Why, there was only one real best catch—Allan Harper. Allan was in Kansas City on a business trip or he'd more than likely have taken her to the dance. Allan had "rushed" her pretty much all winter—oh, nothing to excite comment—for he took other girls places, too. But she was the one he went with most. He took her riding in his gay blue roadster, brought her candy, took her to supper at the Club and the Garden Café and out to Jones, Burke Center's respectable and only roadhouse, where you get "dandy steaks" and "wonderful chicken dinners."

Allan must be about thirty-five, Millie thought, but age meant little to her. She wasn't really in love with him, of course. But, then, she wasn't in love with anyone else. She didn't believe, in the first place, that there was such a thing as the love you read about in the magazines.

She could get quite a thrill when she thought of Allan. He was a heavenly dancer. He was cashier of the First National Bank of Burke Center. His father, old A. J. Harper, was the bank's chief stockholder and president. Allan would be president, himself, without a

doubt, some day. And Mrs. A. J. was head of the Woman's Fortnightly Book and Literary Club, the very heart of Burke Center's culture. A severe, tight little woman who wore rustling browns usually, she attended club federations all over the country as a delegate from Burke Center's oasis of learning. She ignored Millie, it is true, but as her daughter-in-law Millie felt she could get along all right with Mrs. Harper, quite manage her, in fact.

It was all simple. Millie had taken charge of her own social career. Now, at twenty-four, she was one of the really most popular members of the Burke Center Society Set. It would be simple enough to marry the most popular man in town. Allan Harper was that, of course.

Millie wondered, just as she fell asleep, why she hadn't thought of it sooner. There had been dozens of times when she could have led Allan into a proposal. She saw that now. Women were the ones who did that sort of thing. Men were glad enough to be unattached, free. She didn't blame them. If she were a man she knew she would never marry. With women it was different. Why, it was almost a disgrace not to marry. Especially a girl like her—if she didn't marry—in a year or so, with new girls coming out every year, her own position would become less secure. Now was the time, of course. It was quite simple. She was glad she had thought of it this soon, anyhow. Allan Harper. "Mrs. Allan Harper, the leader of Burke Center's Young Married Set . . ."

Millie had never received a proposal of marriage, except from a cross-eyed traveling salesman for a plumbing supply house. She knew this was because she had never encouraged men, "led them on." She always had had a good time and had been satisfied with that, skirting away from undue affection or sentiment. That had been all right. Now was the time for matrimony.

* * *

The next morning Millie got up late, as she always did. As usual, her

mother and Ray had already prepared the simple breakfast for three—Millie never ate with the family in the morning—and had cleaned up the table. Millie had all of the “family beauty’s” selfishness and thoughtlessness. She put on a pink cotton crêpe kimono, whose blue butterflies had “run” in the laundry, and got downstairs about ten. Her mother welcomed her with a genial, “Have a good time, Mil?” in her harsh, rather loud voice, as she came into the dining room.

“Pretty good,” said Millie. “So many of those little snips there, you know—girls just out of high school. How they do giggle and carry on.”

“You were young yourself, once, Millie,” said her mother and laughed one of her sudden laughs, which left her face expressionless.

Millie looked at her mother sharply.

“Huh,” she said, “I wouldn’t say I was old, now. I don’t look a day older than I did when I was twenty and you know it. You don’t call twenty-four old?”

“Maybe not. Only I was married when I was nineteen. And even Ray—Oh, well, no use worrying about it. Have a good time while you can. Only, if a real, good catch comes along . . .”

Millie looked around for Ray.

“Ray’s in the front room, cleaning up. Somebody’s got to do it.”

Millie came a little closer to her mother.

“You’re right, Mom,” she said, dropping her voice into a soft confidence. She scarcely ever grew confidential with her mother or with anyone else. “Twenty-four is young enough but its none too young, I’ll admit. I’ve been so busy having a good time that—well, I can tell you one thing. I’m no fool. You know that. I’ll get a good catch when I get ready. There’s a lot of good fish in the sea.”

She dropped into her chair at the table, picked up the morning paper, pushed back her hair which she hadn’t taken the trouble to do up and which hung around her shoulders, unbraided.

It was quite coarse but crisp and light and nice looking.

Her mother, seeing that confidences were over, hurried into the kitchen with mincing steps in her too-high heeled shoes—she wore her old dress shoes in the mornings—hurried back, presently with some hot muffins and a cup of coffee. Fruit and a dish of raspberry preserves were already on the table and Mrs. Barnes knew that Millie didn’t care for “much for breakfast.”

Millie ate and read. She talked no more during the meal save a “Good morning, Ray,” rather pleasantly, when her sister, sallow, thin, a blue and white lace boudoir cap on her head in lieu of a dust cap, passed through the dining room, carrying the broom and dustpan.

“Have a good time?” asked Ray.

“Pretty good,” said Millie, her mouth full of muffin. She did not elaborate this time.

She brushed the crumbs from her lap, preparatory to going upstairs.

“Going out?” asked her mother.

“Uh huh,” said Millie, “Fred Millburg, you know, that good-looking drummer from Chicago, the friend of the Klews, is in town and he’s got to go to Glen City on business, so he said he’d get a car from the garage and drive me over. We’ll have lunch in Glen City and I’ll be home in plenty of time for dinner.”

Millie was proud of “dinner.” She had forced it upon a dinner-at-twelve-supper-at-six family with rather good success, though her father never quite thoroughly understood that twelve o’clock did not mean dinner-time and James and Estelle always spoke of “dropping in to supper.” James and Estelle possessed all of the traits that Millie found most annoyingly middle-class.

Her mother called after her, as she left the room.

“Say Millie, do me a favor.”

“What is it, Mamma? Hurry up. I’ve got to dress.” Millie was not gracious about it.

“It’s about tomorrow—Sunday—you

know. James and Estelle and Junior will be here for dinner—"

"That's no surprise. I ought to know it by this time. They haven't missed a Sunday in years. Estelle 'ud rather come here than cook a meal any time, you bet. Sunday they're always on the job. They sit around all day and if callers come in, there they are—James with his coat off, smoking his cheap cigars, and Estelle with her stupid chatter. I wish that—"

"Now, Mil, don't get started. I've heard enough of that before. If my own son wants to come here to dinner and bring his own wife and child with him, it ain't for you to criticize."

"Don't say 'ain't, Mamma. Is that joyful news all you wanted of me?"

"No, it—ain't. Estelle is bringing her cousin, Alec Timmons, with her. I want you to stay at home for a change and talk nicely to him. Last time he was here you left right after dinner and the time before that you weren't here all day."

"Oh, Mom, have a heart. Alec Timmons—of all people. That silly fool with his last year's jokes and year-before-last hat. I don't like to have him here at all, if you must know. What if some—some of my crowd should see him here? It would look nice, wouldn't it? Alec Timmons, who clerks at the Black and White Drug Store. Why, he even slings soda when the soda boy is out. And I'm to put in a Sunday entertaining Alec Timmons!"

"Now, Millie, don't put on airs. He's Estelle's first cousin—as good as we are. It isn't as if you didn't know him. You went to school with him, clear through Grammar and High School."

"We went to the same school, but that's about all we did do the same and you know it. He was always working nights. He looks like a frightened rabbit and wears awful clothes. Honest, Mom, I'm actually ashamed to speak to him on the street, when I'm with someone I know. He just—ain't my sort. You know that. But because he happens to be my sister-in-law's cousin, he gets rung in on family dinners. Oh, all

right, if there isn't anything else to do, I may spend the day entertaining Alec Timmons. But don't count too much on it."

CHAPTER III

WHEN Millburg called, driving one of Burke Center's regulation "for rent" cars, Millie was almost ready. She was putting on a fresh white linen suit, which Ray had washed and ironed a couple of days before. With this she wore a small cream-colored hat, with a pink rose on it, that tied firmly under her chin. It was a very appropriate hat for May. Millie always dressed appropriately.

Millie enjoyed the drive, though the road to Glen was covered with a fine, white dust. She liked the luncheon at the Glen City House and Millburg's conversation, plumped out with raisins of wit from the latest city vaudeville shows. Then she sat in the hotel parlor and pretended to read a magazine but watched the people who passed in and out, while Millburg attended to his business call.

She liked the ride back, too, and got home just in time for dinner but not in time to help prepare it. She insisted that Millburg stay for dinner. She knew how tired traveling men get of hotel cooking and that her mother was a good cook. He "made" Burke Center every month or so and was always nice to Millie.

She hurried into the kitchen.

"Mom," she said, pleasantly, "I've just invited Fred Millburg to stay to dinner. You know what a good cook he thinks you are. Take off your apron and tell Ray not to talk about what happened when she was a bride and for Heaven's sake don't let Papa come to the table in his shirt sleeves. Now, don't frown, Mamma. I don't ask for much around here. What you got for dinner? That's all right. I'll open a can of shrimp and fix a salad. You ought always to have salads. Other people do. Go in and say 'Hello' to Mr. Millburg. Wipe your face, first. It's awfully shiny."

Mrs. Barnes was too accustomed to Millie to protest. Millie watched her indifferently as she took off her apron, smoothed her always too oily hair in the uneven mirror that hung at one side of the sink. As Millie put bought salad dressing on the shrimps, she heard her mother's unpleasant laughter in the living room.

Oh, her mother meant well enough. Not a bad sort. Millburg had asked about her with real interest. Not that Millburg counted. A good fellow but nothing permanent. Nice to have him appear every month or so and take her to shows and dances. Millburg, like perhaps a dozen other commercial travelers who "made" Burke Center, was a member of three fraternal orders and those and his business connections gave him a definite social standing in town. Millie had met him a year before at one of the dances. But a drummer was of course nothing to her. When she married—she would marry, of course—she wanted someone more important than that. She wondered if Allan Harper would be home over Sunday, if he'd telephone her.

Millie and Millburg went to the Gem that night to see a movie, "The Purple Talisman." There really was nothing else to do. Nice people didn't give parties in Burke Center on Saturday night. Ordinary people—including her father and mother and Ray and James and Estelle,—went downtown, walking up Main Street buying supplies which they carried in little paper bundles. Millie was ashamed when she met any of her family. An automobile ride or a movie, that was quite all right—but walking downtown on Saturday night, ugh!

After the show, where Millie spoke to several of her set but didn't notice a number of old school acquaintances, she and Fred Millburg joined Fanny Martin and Bill Hilmer—whose father owned the New York Emporium—he and Fanny were reported to be engaged—and the four of them got a table at the Bronson and had tongue sandwiches and lemonade. Others of the crowd were at other tables and they joked

back and forth, ignoring the rest of the searchers after refreshments as if they were non-existent, as indeed they were to the Society Set of Burke Center.

The next day Millie got up late as usual. Roy Fisher rang up while she was dressing and asked her to go driving with him. Another couple was going along and they were "going out to Jones's" for supper. Millie accepted at once. She had long since forgotten she was to talk to Alec Timmons, though remembering would not have altered her acceptance.

She put on another dress, a white one with pink lines in it. She could wear the same cream-colored hat. Dinner was at one on Sunday. She was going driving at three but she would dress before dinner, if her mother didn't ask her to help in the kitchen.

At twelve, just Millie had finished her toilet and was in the living-room looking over the Society Column of the Burke Center *Journal*, the dinner guests arrived. It was a warm day and James wore a pair of blue trousers and a black alpaca coat which made him look much older. Estelle, dark eyed and dark haired, the type, who eight years before had been slim and graceful, was fat, now, with a sort of billowing fatness that seemed impossible to have been of recent attainment. She was a fresh, breezy woman with a word for everything. The thing Millie especially resented in her was Estelle's assumption that she and Millie were equals, quite alike, good friends and had a great deal in common. Estelle was always telling Millie of bargains in cheap underwear, of ribbon sales, of how to make "darling little shirtwaists."

Junior, as usual, was sullen, scowling, a bit backward, silent. He had brought a drawing book with him and an instant after arriving he sat on the floor, his near-sighted eyes bent too close to the pages.

Millie welcomed them all with rather distant cordiality. She was friendly even to Alec Timmons, even while she thought that Estelle had had the nerve

to bring him and to think that he would be welcome.

Timmons was not a bad-looking fellow, in a rather cheap way. He was loosely built and awkward, which made him look shorter than he actually was. He had light curly hair which grew far back from a quite broad forehead. His face was always a trifle red and this, too, exaggerated the size of his forehead and made the rest of his features seem insignificant, as indeed they were. His eyes were light and small and seemingly lashless, as is so frequent with that type of blond. He had a way of winking rapidly that did not improve his appearance. His mouth and nose were rather indefinite and formless, giving him, especially in profile, a simple and child-like expression. Although he was not more than twenty-five or six his hair was thinning noticeably. He rubbed various lotions which the drug store afforded into his hair and a slight odor of hair tonic always clung to him. He was full of long stories, the points of which he usually forgot before he came to them, though when he remembered them the stories were not greatly improved.

"We came good and early," said Estelle, "because I want to have a nice, long talk with the family. It takes such a long time to get here I always say it's a waste of energy if we can't have a visit both before and after dinner."

"Mamma and Ray are in the kitchen," Millie explained. "I had a headache and the day was so warm that they didn't want me to help them."

"Well, we'll all stay in here and talk, then," Estelle answered. "I know they wouldn't let me do anything if I did offer. And the trip here was so warm I don't feel like working around too much, either. You been going out a lot lately, ain't you? I saw your name in the *Journal* twice this morning."

"Yes," said Millie, "I've had a very pleasant Spring."

"I see you in the Black and White a lot," put in Alec. "You certainly are the life of the party, most of the time. I saw you there Tuesday with Harper,

old A.J.'s son, but I couldn't catch your eye."

"Yes?" smiled Millie.

"You certainly mix it up with the society boys, don't you? Harper doesn't stick around this town all the time, does he. I've heard rumors that he makes a lot of trips to Kansas City."

"Yes, Mr. Harper has a great deal of business in Kansas City," Millie said, rather primly. She didn't want Alec to talk about her crowd nor to feel that he knew her too well.

"That so?" Alec went on unperturbed, "well, he looks like a gay boy. Maybe not. Kansas City ain't such a gay town. Not any more, anyhow. I guess no town is. When I was studying pharmacy in Chicago there were some boys in our school that could have given Harper a few points on how to act in the city. There were a gay lot of us. We, five of us, lived in a boarding house on State Street. You can talk about Bohemia, but we were the real Bohemians. You ought to have seen some of the stunts we used to pull off. I remember one evening about nine o'clock we all decided—"

Millie listened to long anecdotes until her mother announced that dinner was ready. Her father, wearing, as usual, a vest and no coat, came into the living room with the others. He had been walking around the house, pulling at plants, watching his neighbors, trying the locks on the doors, puttering generally, as he did usually on Sunday mornings.

There were roast chicken and mashed potatoes, peas, string beans and floating island for dinner. The conversation was general, though once in a while Alec Timmons would address himself exclusively to Millie, something about "Remember Joe Grinch that used to be in our class when we were Freshmen? Well, the other day I'd just got down to the Black and White when who should walk into the store—"

The meal seemed long. Millie didn't actually despise Alec. In fact, had he belonged to her crowd she would have encouraged him as a nice fellow. It

was just that he was too humble, too willing to please and yet conceited, too, in his ability to take the center of the stage with his long stories. Oh, well, he was nothing in her life. She had to see him only once in a while. Thank Heavens, Estelle didn't have any other cousins.

When Roy Fisher drove up, Millie welcomed him gayly. She explained to Alec and Estelle and James that she'd had the engagement with Fisher for a long time and had tried to get out of it but didn't want to hurt his feelings.

"I'll try to get back before you leave," she said, knowing that the guests would stay to supper but quite sure that Fisher's party would last long after the departure of her brother and his wife, as indeed it did.

CHAPTER IV

ALLAN HARPER got back from Kansas City on Tuesday and telephoned Millie the next day. On Thursday night he called to take her to a dinner at the Country Club. Another couple was with them, so Millie had little opportunity to talk with Harper. They took the others home, finally, and then she had him all to herself. Harper was of medium height and rather stout. He always wore dark clothes, carefully tailored. He bought them in one of the larger cities and they looked as if they were always a trifle too small. His face was round and his eyes protruded a little. He was a genial fellow, however, and thought by the female population of Burke Center to be quite handsome.

Millie snuggled just a bit closer to him, though she was careful not to interfere with his driving. Harper was always rather silent and as he had frequently complimented Millie on being "entertaining," she chatted now as gayly as she could.

"You certainly didn't miss much at the dance last night excepting the engagement. As that will probably keep on for quite a while I don't believe you missed much of that. The bashful near-groom looked as if something worse

than matrimony was going to happen to him."

She looked at Harper to see if he were in a kindly mood. Reassured by his smile, she went on:

"Though there are worse things than getting married, I guess. Folks always rail against it but sooner or later they all fall. So there must be something to it, when people get away with it the way they do. I think the only reason more men aren't marrying is because of the expense. The average girl is so extravagant. She feels she must have everything she wants. She keeps men away from marrying her. I'd like my mother to be put in charge of a few of these thoughtless, modern girls. She has always taught us to be awfully economical. Of course we've had to be careful, we are so awfully poor. But, even then, I think it's a good thing. I've—I've never had any lovely things. But I know I'd appreciate them if I ever did."

All of her talk with Harper was of this sort. She spoke of his generosity and his kindness, of what a wonderful husband he would make "for some girl" and then changed the subject before he could think she meant anything more personal. She talked, too, of his odd personality and told him how sensitive she knew he was, how easily this same sensitiveness could be hurt—how she understood him.

Millie did not plan any definite attack but she worked hard. That evening, Harper was especially nice to her. He was even nicer in the weeks that followed. Before this he had been pleasant enough. Now he began to give Millie little presents, some books she had spoken of, a set for her desk in red leather, a cigarette holder—it was considered very devilish to smoke even one cigarette in Burke Center but Millie, when she was with Harper, had often smoked a little.

Millie smiled happily to herself at her progress. After all, hadn't it been easy? Here she was, with quite no effort at all, going with the nicest man in town. Her ideal, to be sure, was not quite so settled, so opinionated. But, when one is

twenty-four and the ideal man has not appeared, isn't it quite as well to get the next best substitute? Millie thought it was.

She glowed pleasantly, these days. She smiled cryptically when her friends teased her about Harper. She was more agreeable at home, even listening to Ray's stories of her courtship and marriage without getting peevish. She rather neglected her other men acquaintances, to be sure. But why not? If you can get the pick of the town, why bother about anyone else? Millie smiled a bit patronizingly at those just on the edge of the crowd. A few girls, whom she disliked, she began to cut altogether, making up her mind that when she was Mrs. Allan Harper and the accepted leader of the Society Set she would see that those girls were dropped from the crowd.

Harper never made love to her. Millie recognized that and it worried her. He never said anything definite at all. One night, during an exciting story at the movies, she grabbed his hand. He squeezed her hand a little, but more gently than a lover should have done. He never attempted any liberties. In fact, Millie was rather surprised at his aloofness. She was not a "petting" type, but she had been kissed by a number of men and she liked kissing. Still, if Harper were not too affectionate perhaps that was even in his favor. She did hope he wouldn't carry on a three-year courtship or anything like that. She'd encourage him as much as she could and as quickly. She was twenty-four.

Harper went up to Kansas City on another trip perhaps a month later. On his return he telephoned Millie and asked to call that night, that he had "something important to tell her." Millie had had an engagement with Roy Fisher but she broke it immediately, telling Roy that for a whole week she had promised Harper he might call on the night he got home.

That night Millie put on her most becoming frock, of thin blue organdie that she and Ray had made.

It was late June and the night was an especially beautiful one. Harper arrived about eight while it was still light. Millie immediately took him out to the swinging seat which had been built a few years before under two trees in the back yard. It had served for all of Millie's affairs of the heart which had taken place in warm weather.

Harper was in a peculiarly jubilant mood. It came to Millie that perhaps he had bought her an engagement ring in Kansas City or something like that. He seemed properly embarrassed, too, and awfully happy.

After an hour of repartee it was quite dark. It was then that, at Millie's plea of "Go on and tell. I'm so anxious to hear what you have to tell me," that Harper told his news.

The fact was, he was engaged. Yes, that was it. To the most wonderful girl in the world. She lived in Kansas City. Her father was a banker and he had met her at a bankers' convention, two years ago. But Retta, that was her name, hated small towns and it had taken her all that time to make up her mind that Burke Center was the place in which to live. No, she wasn't exactly Millie's type, being smaller and darker and not what you'd call a beauty. But a charming girl.

They were to be married in August, perhaps. He was telling Millie about it the first thing. For he felt that Millie was one of his best friends. He didn't know what he'd have done without her, especially these last few weeks when he was so worried about Retta. He had told Retta about her and he knew they'd like each other. Other girls would have acted so silly—Millie knew how that was—you can't go with the average Burke Center girl more than a couple of times before she thinks you want to marry her. Thank Heavens, Millie was different. It really meant a lot to a man to find a girl who could be a good pal. He'd tried to show in a lot of ways how he liked her. That's why he told her about his engagement the very first thing. No, it wasn't to be announced for perhaps a month yet, but now that

it was so he just had to tell Millie. He knew how sympathetic she'd been. Hadn't he heard her views on matrimony, knew how she felt?

Millie felt as if her backbone had suddenly been removed, painlessly. She sort of folded up in the swinging seat. But, even with that empty, gone feeling, she had the sense of self-preservation that most women possess which makes them almost unbelievably good actresses, off stage. In two minutes she was laughing and giggling and telling Harper how happy she was over this good news, how attractive Retta was on the blurred two-inch snap-shot he showed her. Of course they would be good friends, always—

CHAPTER V

THAT night after Harper had gone and Millie had undressed and hung the organdie carefully away and braided her hair and put cold cream on her face and put on her plain cotton night gown, she got into the bird's-eye maple bed and thought for a couple of hours.

Well, Harper was gone. Absolutely. He hadn't been in love with her or cared for her at all. He was engaged. And he had been absolutely the most eligible man in Burke Center. It wasn't as if she had loved him. She hadn't. It was just as though she had lost something, a Christmas present, something like that.

Seeing Harper now, from the outside, she saw that she actually disliked most of the things about him, his neatness, his suavity, his conceit. And yet she knew she would have married him gladly, if she had had the chance. He gave her not a single thrill in any way—never could have—and yet she would have married him. She was poor and nobody and he was the banker's son. Oh, well, he was gone, now. There were other good fish in the sea.

Lying there, her arm under her head, Millie went over the young men in Burke Center. To her horror, there weren't so many good fish, after all.

S. S.—Aug.—2

The best ones had been caught long ago, or were already dangling after some other line. Fanny Martin had practically got Bill Hillmer, but then, Fanny was rich and lived in a big house on Rock Road and entertained a lot. It was hard, having to do everything alone. Still, she hadn't really failed, yet. Harper had already been in love when she started planning about him so that hadn't really been a good test. Of course not. She'd pick out a man and find out, definitely, that he wasn't in love or engaged. Then she'd get somewhere. After all, she was pretty and young and popular.

Harper's engagement wasn't to be announced for a month yet. She'd stop going with him, gradually. She must get someone, a real admirer, before the engagement. She couldn't bear the thought of being laughed at.

There was Lucius Miller. Lucius had an inquiring face and a mouth that resembled Fanny Martin's largest goldfish. But his father had a wholesale business and he didn't go with any other girl more than he did with Millie—that is, more than he had gone with Millie before she began spending so much time with Harper.

There was Roy Fisher. Roy was a nice boy. In a way. That is, after you'd said "Roy is a nice boy," you'd finished with Roy, definitely. He was about a year older than Millie but he seemed younger. He was supposed to be a lawyer. That is, his father was a lawyer and Roy had been graduated from a law school and was thought to be practicing law with his father but he did not work a great deal. He had a round, pleasant, sincere face and rather a vacant laugh.

Then there was Clifton Ellis. He took Millie to parties, sometimes. He was thin and dark. He spent most of his time with a group of boys whom Millie thought decidedly inferior. You could see him, any time of day, standing around the fire-house, a cigarette hanging out of the corner of his mouth, or shambling down the street. Cliff was "wild," too, and went with girls whom

one didn't talk about. Sometimes he and a couple of other fellows would pick up girls on the street and take them driving through the town at night. So Cliff was not awfully desirable, even though his father was wealthy and his sister, Dora, was one of Millie's best friends.

There were other men, of course. But some of them had sisters who didn't approve of Millie. Not that Millie cared, but the brothers, unfortunately, were not beyond family influence. Some of them, too, were impossible—types that Millie loathed or types to whom she did not appeal.

Millie shuddered.

It had looked so easy, getting married. If she were only rich! Or if her family were prominent! But they weren't. Well, she'd have to do something. All the rest of her family had married. Surely she was as desirable as Estelle or Ray. They had married. Not of course that she would consider the sort of men they had been satisfied with. She was better than they were in every way, certainly. So she ought to marry better.

Well, she would be especially nice to Roy and Cliff and Lucius, starting right away. They all liked her. They were all nice to her or had been until she had started going with Allan Harper. They were younger than Allan, too, nearer her own age and would be more congenial, even if they weren't quite as important, socially. At least all three of them had fathers who stood high in the community and all had good social positions. Most girls in Burke Center would have been satisfied with them.

Millie went over the charms of the three. Fish-faced Lucius was obliging and courteous and full of ideals. He liked to talk, stupidly, about books and life. Simply Roy was patient and gentle and didn't mind being ordered around. Cliff was jolly and lots of fun, even if he was a trifle coarse. Not a marvelous array of charms, to be sure. But, after all, if one must stay in Burke Center and if one must marry, one must accept the material that is offered.

CHAPTER VI

It was July and Millie was still unattached. But she had progressed in a way. It was Roy Fisher who was courting her. Even those of the crowd who least approved of Millie had to admit that Roy was becoming properly attentive. Roy had an automobile and every night, now, it could be seen stopping in front of the Barnes' cottage. Fifteen minutes or so later, Millie, in an attractive summer frock of pink or pale blue or green would come out on the porch and join Roy and the two of them would be off to a dance or a movie or a drive, alone or with another couple.

After all, Roy was a nice boy. There was nothing objectionable about him, unless one objected to rather negative, unobjectionable people. Roy was lazy, but then his father gave him an allowance, just as if he really had a law practice.

It was nice, too, to think that he was a professional man, a college graduate. Mrs. Fisher was quite a nice woman, too, and never snubbed Millie the way so many matrons did. When she chaperoned at dances, she always smiled at Millie or spoke to her in a gentle, rather hesitating voice. Roy got his laziness and his gentleness from his mother. Millie knew there were worse traits in husbands than that. The Fishers owned real estate, too, and were rich for Burke Center. Already Roy was holding Millie's hand. He was genuinely fond of her. He even kissed her one night when he brought her home. Millie would have preferred him bolder. What of it? As a husband he'd be quite satisfactory. It was only a matter of days now.

Allan Harper announced his engagement. Millie, being satisfactorily rushed by Roy Fisher, felt only the tiniest dart of pain. No one said sarcastic things to her. It was very nice. So—life was settled satisfactorily after all. She could marry Roy and they could have one of the new houses in Ellis Park, where so many of the newly married couples of their set were moving.

Fishers owned some real estate there, Millie knew. Nice little houses of white clapboards with green blinds and pretty foundation planting all around them. Not like Avelon Addition. Inside, she could have slender mahogany and lots of cream woodwork. Not as grand as Allan Harper and Rock Road but awfully nice. Maybe the Fishers would give them a grand piano for a wedding present. She'd have a maid, of course. A maid the first thing. Just one, but she'd wear caps and aprons and a very neat black dress every afternoon. There'd be a garage back of the house for Roy's car.

Mrs. Roy Fisher, Ellis Park, Burke Center!

"One of the smartest functions of the season was the bridge party given yesterday afternoon by Mrs. Roy Fisher at her attractive home in Ellis Park to the members of the Young Married Set. The living room looked very attractive with its decorations of—"

Millie visualized a dozen such notices. Not bad! Roy—oh, she wouldn't mind Roy. He'd never bother her or be in the way. A nice boy. She'd get used to him, be fond of him even. Why not?

Then Forrest Walker came to Burke Center. Dr. Forrest Walker, to be more accurate. He came to take charge of the sanitarium for nervous cases that Dr. Jefferson and Dr. Grant had started. They wanted a young man in charge, had heard of the work Dr. Walker had done in another sanitarium and had engaged him. Forrest Walker!

Millie met him the first week he was in Burke Center. It was at a dance at the Country Club. As she saw him, the whole place seemed to change. The crude club, low, cheaply painted, with its rows of chairs always full of dull married couples or girls whose dances were not taken, became suddenly a place of glory and of wonder. The lights seemed to blaze, the music to flare up.

That first night Millie had two dances with him. Later, she lay awake for hours thinking about him. It was

nearly daylight before she fell asleep. When she woke up, at ten, she started in thinking about him again as if she had never stopped at all.

Forrest Walker. The knight in the shining armor had come to Burke Center! He had danced with her—two dances. Tonight he was coming to call. Tonight! Forrest!

What a wonder he was! And yet—she had tried to marry Allan Harper—middle aged and stupid. And she was going with—that is, had been going with Roy. What if she had married one of them and then Forrest had come? She closed her eyes and drew in her breath at her escape. Of course she had waited. This, then, was what folks meant by Fate. Forrest Walker.

From the first moment he seemed to like her, know about her, belong to her. Two dances—he had had to take one of those from Roy. Why, he was real—here in Burke Center! Fate, of course.

He was tall and slender, as she had known, must have known he would be. His hair was dark brown and a bit waved, a bit mussed looking. His eyes were dark. She wasn't sure yet whether they were brown or hazel. Maybe dark gray. How wonderful not to know! She had noticed his hands though. Nice hands, of course, with rather long nails and long fingers and prominent knuckles. Rather pale hands. But then, in spite of his dark hair, he was rather pale. She liked his mouth.

Until then, Millie didn't know the kind of mouths and noses she liked best excepting on the stage. She knew now. His eyebrows were remarkably smooth, glitteringly smooth even. His lashes were long. His nose was quite straight and yet there was an adorable unevenness about it. She liked his mouth best of all. It was large and yet a bit decisive and cold. Cold? Not the lips, probably. Forrest!

Forrest called the night after the dance, in his neat, shiningly new roadster. Millie wore frilly white and no hat. The moon was full. They drove out Rock Road, where the trees nearly met overhead. Black trees with gold

between, where the moon hit the dusty road. Why hadn't she known before how beautiful the country around Burke Center was? Forrest was not discreet like Allan nor timid like Roy. Of course not. He kissed Millie that night before he took her home. Millie hadn't known that kisses could be like these. Yet—hadn't she known?

That night, too, she lay awake. She kissed her own arm, trying to make the memory of Forrest's kisses more vivid. Millie hadn't let any other man kiss her until he had known her a long time and been nice to her—earned the kisses. But Forrest. He was different, of course. His kisses were different. She was glad he had kissed her. There was not an instant when she doubted him. He hadn't told her he loved her. But then she had known him such a little while. Two dances—a ride—kisses. This was Life then. No wonder poetry had seemed something not understandable before. She knew now what poems had meant when they were about love. She was twenty-four. Wasn't that a good age—for love?

CHAPTER VI

ROY FISHER took her to the movies the next night. She never knew what the picture was about nor what Roy said. What did it matter what Roy said? The next night there was a dance at the Country Club and Roy was her escort. She searched for Forrest as she came in. He arrived half an hour later. Their eyes met in a secret understanding. She danced five dances with him. She didn't listen when Roy, patient and a bit hurt, asked why she didn't talk and if she really saw anything in the new doctor.

A month, then six weeks, two months. August. September. It didn't seem possible to Millie that it was that long. Forrest! The nights were cool now and the days shorter. Forrest telephoned her nearly every morning. She waited for the telephone to ring in her faded cotton kimona—it was blue now, but it had faded after the first washing

just as the pink one had done. She knew Forrest didn't like her to telephone him at the sanitarium; it disturbed his routine and he was busy. But he telephoned to her nearly every day.

Millie would sit in her room or in the living room, a book in her hand and pretend to read. She never read more than a page. Sometimes she read that half a dozen times. When the telephone rang she ran to it so eagerly that she reached it breathless, even though she was only a few feet away.

"Hello," she would answer, her voice trembling.

"Hello," the voice would come to her, deep, toneless, "Miss Barnes?"

"Yes, oh, good morning—Forrest."

"Hello, little 'un. I wasn't sure it was you. How's the girl? Fine. Good for a drive tonight? At eight? Great stuff. 'Bye."

At eight!

Millie would spend the day in any way. What did it matter, the daytime? Sometimes one of the girls would come in and they'd walk downtown or go to see other girls. They'd talk clothes or parties. Millie would only half listen. Or Millie would not dress all day and would stay in her room, lying across her bed, after she put the faded cretonne cover over it. She'd read one of the books Forrest had given her—books with funny little inscriptions in them: "*From me—For you, August twenty-two.*" And the one that came the very next day, "*For you—From me, August twenty-three.*" And two weeks later, in a thin book of poems, "*For Millie, from someone who wishes he could write these for her.*" In a copy of "*Anatol*," "*In memory of a day on a mountain.*"

Millie would read each of these inscriptions over and over again, conjuring up Forrest's expression as he had given the books to her. Other men in Burke Center didn't read books like that. Other men in Burke Center didn't write like Forrest—a small, very neat, rather cramped hand, a typical doctor's hand. Millie had never known that

Oscar Wilde wrote poems until Forrest had given her a volume of them. She hadn't known the meaning of color in writing. Nor whimsey. But now she knew the things she liked. Forrest read Wilde to her and "A Shropshire Lad," "The Hunting of the Snark," Rupert Brooke, Rosetti. Some of the books were bound in the light blue paper of Mosher. They were mostly love poems. They were all very dear to her.

All day she would read, going over and over some sentimental poem that Forrest had liked especially. She would be half in a dream, wasting time. It annoyed her to have her mother or Ray talk to her or interrupt her musings. She grew superstitious and was careful about the way her shoes stood under her bed, about the moon, about four-leaf clovers, about seeing the first star. It was very beautiful, being in love, and yet tremulous, too, as if something unpleasant were about to happen.

In the evening she would dress slowly, taking a long time over her simple toilet. She grew a little thinner, but her cheeks still had a good color and her hair was fluffy and her too-blue eyes were pleasantly bright.

She tried never to be dressed until just before Forrest came, so that she would be as fresh-looking as possible and powdery and fragrant. Sometimes he came before seven to dinner. She was always surprised then. He seemed such a stranger. He talked pleasantly with her mother and father and Ray. He knew so much more to talk with them about than the other men she knew. Yet he wasn't old—no more than twenty-eight. His college training and his hospital work had given him a certain freedom of expression and an at-homeness that made him seem master of the situation. And yet a stranger. Millie felt that same thing at parties, too. He seemed cool and distant and apart. Yet ten minutes after they had left the crowd he would put his arms around her and would seem very near, as if he belonged to her.

Sometimes Forrest would come in

after dinner, but he always asked for the rest of the family, even then, and spent a few minutes chatting pleasantly. Then they would go to parties or drives or to spend the evening with other members of the crowd. Sometimes, even in a crowd, when he was almost a stranger, so distant was his attitude, Millie could hardly keep from putting her hand out and touching his hand or his hair. She was almost afraid to find how happy she was. This was living. The days seemed gloriously full.

The end of September Millie noticed a change, just a little one. It was hardly a change even, at first. Yet, a week later and she knew the change was true. Forrest would say something about "belonging all to him" or "giving herself to him."

"Can't you trust me?" he would ask.

Of course she knew what he meant. She pretended not to, but of course she knew. It hurt her. Though she had planned, in absolute cold blood, to marry men she did not care for, yet when the man she loved asked that she "belong" to him, all of her small-town inhibitions rose very strongly. She could not even consider such a thing. She pretended to be indignant when she was not indignant at all. She just didn't like to talk about it. It was simply something she could not do. She had been taught such things were wrong. That was all. She would tell Forrest that he "didn't respect her," which, while it was true enough, made him angry.

They were not quite as happy after that. Soon they were quarreling over little things, odd moods, stray emotions. There were fewer books now, less candy and new music and Victrola records.

Forrest would ask:

"Can't you trust me? Don't you think I know how to take care of you?" Millie would say:

"Don't talk like that to me. You wouldn't if you loved me."

"It's because I love you," he would answer.

He would push her away when she tried to kiss him.

Weeks of quarreling then. October came.

Forrest was busy. A new wing had been added to the sanitarium and they were bringing patients there from all over the state, especially nervous cases from the farms. So Forrest frequently worked at night. Even when he didn't, occasionally, he preferred spending an evening with male acquaintances in town.

On the evenings he was not with her Millie was restless, miserable. Sometimes she wrote notes to him, stupid, inconsequential notes in a vertical, unformed hand. Sometimes she cried a little. But she hoped, always, that Forrest would "quit saying such things" and would ask her to marry him. After all, marriage—that was the thing. Why—she was practically twenty-four and a half.

When she did see Forrest they quarreled more than ever. Hardly an evening was spent peacefully. Gradually they seemed to have less and less to say to each other when they were not making love or quarreling. On everyday topics they became curiously uninterested in each other. Millie was perfectly happy if Forrest held her in his arms or if she were running her hand through his waved, dark hair. But seated in the same room with him, a few feet away, and she didn't even care what he was talking about. She knew, too, that he was not interested in her days, that his "How are you?" and "What have you been doing?" were polite formulæ without meaning.

Forrest came to see her less and less frequently. And always, though she knew a crisis would come, Millie thought that Forrest would put his arms around her and ask her to marry him and that all of the other difficulties would be cleared up as if by magic.

Then one day Fanny Martin told Millie that Forrest had asked Helen Jefferson to go to the Elks' Club dance with him. The Country Club was closed now on account of the weather

and the Burke Center Society Set used the Elks' Club for their parties. Helen Jefferson! Helen was eighteen—nineteen at most—a little giggler with black curls and an impudent baby stare and an impudent, pouting mouth. Helen Jefferson!

But—of course he had to ask Helen. Her father was Dr. Jefferson who had started the sanitarium. It was a wonder he hadn't had to take her places before.

What if nobody asked Milly to the dance? She trembled a little. She couldn't stay home. She must be there. She couldn't let Forrest see that she was uninvited—that she cared. Roy Fisher? No, not Roy. Roy was gone, definitely. She remembered now, as if it were part of a dream that had not meant anything. Why—she had almost married Roy, one time.

Then Forrest had come to Burke Center. She had quarreled with Roy and stopped going with him instinctively. The quarreling had meant so little she hardly remembered it. But she knew now, had known for weeks, though it hadn't mattered, that Roy was going with Dora Ellis. In fact, the crowd hinted that they were engaged. She knew Roy. He could imagine himself really in love. He had been in love with her. Once out of love, though, he wouldn't come back. She had seen him with Dora and knew that he would probably stay with Dora. As far as Millie was concerned he was as far away as Allan. What did it matter? What did anything matter but Forrest?

She must get to the dance. She telephoned Lucius Miller, making an excuse that she knew did not deceive him. He chatted pleasantly but made no reference to the dance. And Millie had considered Lucius seriously, at one time. Lucius had developed a sarcastic vein, now. He wasn't interesting, anyhow, of course. Now, he was saying that he never intended to marry and was settling down as if he meant it.

"Shall I see you at the dance on Tuesday?" Millie asked.

"Sure, I'll be there," he told her and asked for a dance, rather indifferently. She hated his fish-like smile. There was no hope there.

She must get to the dance.

The days had dragged by, unbelievably long. Tuesday came. Still no one had asked her. She passed Cliff on the street and stopped to talk but Cliff wasn't going to the dance. "Had another date" and laughed mysteriously as he said it. Tuesday. No invitation.

Each day she had hoped that Forrest would telephone her. But he did not telephone. She had done dozens of little, useless things to keep from writing to him or telephoning. But she hadn't managed to keep from worrying. Was she going to lose Forrest? Why, Forrest was the big thing in her life, the only thing that counted.

She wondered, now, how she was going to live on, year after year without him—if—if something happened. She wondered how she had lived such a long time without knowing him. But, now she did know him, loved him. He had loved her. She knew that. She could get him back, must get him back. How could silly little Helen Jefferson attract him? Of course she knew how it was. It was just on account of Dr. Jefferson. Or he wanted to make her jealous. She couldn't stay home from the dance. She must get there some way. Why, since she was a little girl she had never been left out of anything. Of course, if she hadn't been going exclusively with Forrest someone would have asked her. Even so, she couldn't stay home.

Tuesday, at two in the afternoon, the telephone rang. Millie was almost weak as she answered it. Was it Forrest—to tell her he had broken the engagement with Helen—begging to come back to her?

It was a strange masculine voice, that, it sounded strange because she wanted to hear Forrest. Then she gave a little shout of joy.

"Fred Millburg, you old dear, when did you get to town?" she giggled.

"Just got in. How's every little thing with you?"

"Fine and dandy. Same as ever and a little extra. I certainly am glad you're in town. When are you coming to see me?"

"How about tonight? Going to be at home?"

"Home? Oh, Fred, isn't that great. There's a dance at the Elks' Club and the man I was going with left town yesterday and I was going to trail along with another couple. The whole crowd will be there. Isn't that good stuff?"

"You bet it is. Something always doing in this burg. I'm glad I make it pretty regular."

Millie sighed with relief as she hung up the receiver. She could go to the dance.

CHAPTER VII

SHE wore a new dress that night, a pale yellow, trimmed with little yellow rose-buds. She and her mother and Ray had all worked on it. It was quite low and plain, with a bouffant skirt and cut quite short. Fred pronounced it "some little fluff" when he called for her. As a matter of fact she looked well. The dress made her hair look almost blond and the color blended nicely with her skin. She needed only a little rouge.

It was the usual Burke Center dance. Because she was a dancer, after she finally got there Millie found it easy enough to fill her program. Fred was a likable fellow, with just something a trifle loose about his figure and his manners. He was "a good talker" and a clever salesman. Millie was thankful he was so agreeable.

Helen Jefferson and Forrest had not arrived. Of course Helen would keep Forrest waiting. What a spoiled little thing she was! Still, maybe she bored Forrest. He probably didn't like taking her at all. Why did she take it all so seriously? Millie was glad when her program was filled. But, even while she danced, she seemed waiting for the dance to begin, for Forrest to arrive.

Helen and Forrest got there, finally.

Little Helen was in white, with innumerable ruffles and bits of ribbon, a band of white flowers around her saucy curls.

"She's perfectly darling and she knows it," Millie told herself. The knowledge hurt. If only Helen hadn't been pretty!

Forrest. Yes, he was just the way she had pictured him. Better looking, if anything. Of course he was the best looking man there, sleek and slender, with those oddly polished eyebrows and dark eyes. His firm mouth looked warm, too, against his pale skin.

Forrest smiled at her and Millie felt something snap, a sigh of relief. She had been afraid, though she didn't know why, that he was going to cut her. Yet they hadn't had a real quarrel and he certainly had the right to take another girl to a party if he wanted to.

He walked toward her.

"How about dances?" he asked.

"All taken," she smiled. Then, "That's because I came early. Of course I'll give you one."

She introduced Fred Millburg and wondered what Forrest thought of Fred's rather jovial coarseness. At least he could see she didn't have to stay at home.

Their dance arrived finally.

As they danced, it came to Millie with a shock that Forrest was as far away as if she had never known him. Was this pale, quiet stranger, with a rather thin face and determined mouth and half-closed eyes the same man who had held her in his arms not a week ago. It didn't seem possible. His collar was high and where it met his throat Millie wanted to put her hand. Was it the same curved cheek where her hand had rested so often? She remembered his throat in an open tennis shirt. She had put her hand on the muscles of his neck. This man? Millie sighed and shook her head.

She answered his questions, the questions he always asked, "How are you?" "What have you been doing?"

She didn't care what she said. Yet, when, at the close of the dance he asked, "May I see you tomorrow night?" she nodded with almost a prayer

of thankfulness, though she already had an engagement with Fred and had promised herself she would not see Forrest if he asked to call.

The next night was a repetition of nights that had passed and yet it was different, too. Millie felt that. There was something final, inevitable, about it. They sat in the living room, with only one rose-colored light for illumination. Millie sat on the couch next to Forrest. She had promised herself that she would not touch him, would not even let him hold her hand. Yet, an hour after he had arrived she was in his arms. She knew, then, that it couldn't go on.

"Why are you so cruel to me?" he asked. "Don't you care for me at all, Millie?"

Even as she knew she would not yield, she smiled. But she shook her head more as if she were saying good-bye than as if she were answering him.

They argued as they had argued the past week. Outside of their emotions, outside of sentiment, they had nothing to talk about, no common ground at all. It was only after Forrest had gone, about eleven, early for him, that Millie remembered that she had not said any of the things she wanted to say, that he had told her nothing of his days, of Helen Jefferson, of himself.

Forrest did not telephone again that week, though Millie spent nearly all of her mornings listening for the telephone to ring. In the evening she went out with Fred. Then Fred left town. He would be back in six weeks, would spend Christmas in Burke Center.

"I can't get home. This is a little out of my circuit but you can have a better time here than most of these rube towns where the Christmas tree at the church is folks' idea of a merry Christmas."

Six weeks until Christmas? It was November.

After Fred had gone, the days dragged unbelievably. Millie had a few stray callers, but no one important came to see her. She did not even have an escort to an informal dance and had to stay home. She learned later that Forrest had come in to the dance alone and

had stayed only a few minutes. That didn't hurt as much—as much it might have.

Forrest. She got so she couldn't think of anyone else, anything else. She wrote notes. She telephoned him. He was rather cool over the telephone, but then he frequently was, when anyone telephoned him. He said he would call "in a day or two."

There was another dance. She had no escort and did not go. The next day she heard that Forrest and Helen had been there. Three days later she passed them, riding together in Forrest's little new car and they didn't see her. Helen was chatting diligently.

Another dance, then. This time Clifton Ellis took Millie. In spite of her best efforts she found she could make no impression on him. She wanted to charm him, to have him rush her, so she would get chances to go places. Once, Cliff had liked her awfully well. He was indifferent enough, now.

Millie unpopular? Not exactly. Her dances were always taken. But, then, you've got to get to a dance before folks can dance with you. At the dance to which Ellis escorted her, Forrest did not ask for a dance at all.

She wrote him another note, apologizing for a pretended slight, hinting that, if he came to see her, she would "make up." She made up her mind to yield to him. Even that would be better than losing him. Anything would be better than that. He did not answer her note.

For three days she was able to keep from it but finally she had to telephone to him. He was curt and told her he was awfully busy, that he would ring her when he wanted to talk with her.

Everyone she knew told her he was going with Helen a great deal. Helen! What could he see in her? Yet she was attractive in a way, a kittenish, curly-headed, impudent way.

Millie pictured the two together. That was the worst hurt of all. Was he bringing presents to Helen? Was he kissing Helen good-night? Did he kiss her fingers, one by one, first outside and

then inside? Did he kiss the back of her neck? Her eyelids? Did he hold Helen in his arms?

Millie thought of Forrest and Helen together, talking, laughing, in love and shuddered. She cried herself to sleep. Her superstitions about things grew deeper. Yes, nothing seemed to matter.

November passed, a month of bad weather and loneliness. December came. Dr. and Mrs. Waldo French Jefferson announced the engagement of their daughter, Helen Ruth, to Dr. Forrest Matthews Walker. The Burke Center *Journal* printed the announcement. Millie attended two luncheons, four dinners and a dozen receptions and showers. Forrest was engaged!

That was over. Somehow, a thing that had seemed impossible to bear when she had thought of it, had happened and she had borne it quite nicely. The night the engagement had been announced had been rather terrible. Millie had dug her fists into her pillow and sobbed aloud. But, after that she got half used to it, a sort of a dull pain, a hunger. She was not angry at Forrest nor even disappointed in herself.

Millie was not as attractive to men as she had been before. She knew that. Even Cliff and Harry Rogers and Joe Boise didn't care for her. She went through all of her tricks mechanically. Yet they were tricks that had been used successfully for a time at least with Forrest, tricks, too, that had made her popular, one time, with other men. They were ineffectual, now. Her sex attraction seemed deadened. There was nothing back of the tricks but emptiness.

CHAPTER VIII

FRED MILLBURG spent the Christmas holidays in Burke Center as he had promised. He told Millie he liked her better than any girl in town and he did his best to show her a good time. He took her to the theater and to the Christmas-week dances and she went through a vacant form of having a good time. What did it matter?

Still—Fred. He made a good living. She had to marry someone, eventually. Why not Fred? People liked him. He wouldn't be in town a great deal—she would have lots of time to herself, wouldn't have to bother about him much. Socially, he wasn't important. Still, he was invited every place. It wouldn't be such a bad match. Why not? Better than to be an old maid, anyhow.

At least, Millie thought that until five days after Christmas. It had been a most unsatisfactory Christmas of little gifts and unfilled expectations. Then, as they were in the living-room, eating someone's gift of uncertain candy, Fred said:

"I got to show you something, Mil. I wouldn't spill this to the rest of the gang, because most girls hate married men like poison. But I know you. You're a good kid. You're different. Here's what I want you to see: a letter from my little girl. She wrote it to her Papa. I never told you about the kiddies, have I? Three of 'em. Yes sir-ee. The best kids you ever saw. The wife knows how to bring 'em up and its been pretty hard on her, with me on the road all the time. Well, as the cartoonist says, 'you've got to hand it to the wife.' Little Freddie is seven and Amelia, the one that wrote this letter is six and Willie, the baby, is four and a half."

Fred handed Millie a little soiled, scrawled paper.

"You just read this," he said.

So ended Fred Millburg.

CHAPTER IX.

HELEN and Forrest were married in the Brick Church on New Year's Day. Millie went to the church with three other girls and then to the Jefferson's house for the reception. She ate cake and drank punch, even while she wondered how she did it. Then, even, she went to the station with the crowd and stood outside the train as Helen and Forrest scrambled aboard and then waved from their drawing-room window. She was even jolly on the way

home, in the car with Dora and Cliff Ellis and Walter Batson.

Later, she felt as if she were deadened or under the influence of an anæsthetic. She wondered how she would feel when she woke up.

It was too much of an effort, after that, to find people to take her to dances. Because she had devoted so much time, the past months, to Allan and Roy and— and Forrest, other men of the crowd had lost interest in her.

As each of these men had stopped going with her she had become less important socially. She had been talked about, of course—little whisperings. If her people had been important this wouldn't have hurt. Under the circumstances, it lowered her definitely. A new crop of débutantes had appeared. Four men of the set had gone to various cities "to try their luck." That made an appalling number of extra girls in the crowd. She was not invited frequently. It didn't seem to matter a great deal.

At the end of January, Helen and Forrest came back from their honeymoon and went to live with Dr. Jefferson until their new bungalow, out near the sanitarium—an awfully good part of town—was finished. Millie, with Dora Ellis and Irma Martin, went to call on the bride. That night, Millie didn't sleep a great deal.

January! And in May she would be twenty-five. What had she got out of life, anyhow? Not a great deal. A little row of books in the mahogany sectional bookcase—not more than twenty or so altogether. That's all there was left of Forrest. Other men? A few books, some music, a few tawdry toilet articles and ornaments.

Twenty-five. She wasn't married. She didn't even have any suitors. Nor chances for any. The men she knew who had liked her had gradually seeped away. She went over a list of all the men she knew who paid any attention to her. There wasn't an eligible man on the list.

At the next dance to which she was invited, Millie looked at the men again and thought about them. She couldn't

find one possibility. She thought carefully and she had quite a long time for thought because there were two dances for which she had no partners. She sat, ashamed, in the dressing-room with the girls whom she had always despised. Perhaps it would be best not to go to dances any more at all. The only men who took her were those distinctly on the edge of the crowd, cheap fellows, disagreeable even. Nobody would care at all if she stayed at home.

February passed and March. Millie spent more and more time reading in her room or wandering idly about the house. She wished, rather vaguely, that there was something she could do. She made no effort to find out if there were.

One day her mother came home from a visit with Estelle.

"You know Alec Timmons, Estelle's cousin?" her mother asked, rhetorically, and gave her hollow, exasperating laugh, as she wiped her always oily face.

"Of course," Millie answered, impatiently. For some reason something hurt just a little.

"Well, that fellow's a comer," Mrs. Barnes went on. "Do you know what he's done? He's gone and bought part of the Black and White Drug Store. Ain't that splendid? Estelle said he asked about you. Estelle and James and Junior are coming to dinner on Sunday and they are going to bring him along. You ain't got a date, have you? You ought to stay home and talk to him. Estelle says he's a grand, steady fellow, that all the girls—but say, you know what kind of a fellow he is, going to school with him and all."

* * *

It was the first Sunday in April when they came to dinner. Junior had a mechanical train this time. He sat down on the floor with it as soon as he had taken off his hat and proceeded to take it to pieces, though he never remembered quite how to put it together again. James took off his coat and he and Mr. Barnes sat together near a window and

read the Sunday papers and talked about the news.

Estelle had on a new Spring suit. She talked glowingly of the store at which she had purchased it, a new second-class store with weekly sales of advertised special articles.

"It isn't as stylish as the New York Emporium from the outside, but you'd be surprised at the values. Why, a neighbor of mine, the most charming woman, who lives just around the corner from me in Avelon Addition, got a waist there on Thursday . . ."

Alec Timmons sat by, rather silent, running his hands through his thin curly hair or looking around vacantly. His rather childish shaped nose and mouth seemed more indefinite than ever. Yet he was a kindly soul. Millie didn't at all dislike him. His long stories were a bore, of course, but, after all, a partner in a drug store . . .

There was roast beef for dinner, with potatoes browned with the roast, early asparagus as a special treat, and custard pie. After dinner and after he had told two long and particularly uninteresting stories, Alec asked:

"Going any place particular this afternoon, Millie?"

"No," said Millie, "mamma told me a few days ago that you all were coming so I stayed at home and didn't make a date at all. Any place you'd like to go?"

"I—I thought maybe we might drive out to Avelon Addition. I can borrow a car from a friend of mine. I know how to drive. I expect to get a car myself in a year or two, maybe, when the Black and White has put some of the ideas over that I got in mind. You know I got an interest in the place? Well, this lot in Avelon Addition is just a couple of blocks from Estelle and it's too good a chance to let slip by. Not that I want to build just yet for myself, but every young fellow wants a chance to settle down and have a home. Being lonely is the one thing I don't want to look forward to. So I thought as long as I got a chance to get such a swell piece of property . . ."

"I'd love to go," said Millie.

Why not? Here was a real chance, after all. Plenty of good fish, perhaps, but she'd never been able to catch any of them. She had tried hard enough—Allan Harper—Roy Fisher—Forrest—Forrest—Forrest—to think that once she had hoped—Lucius Miller—Clifton Ellis—Fred Millburg—Forrest . . .

Well, here was Alec Timmons, Alec with his blinky, white-eyelashed, pale eyes, his red forehead, his light curly thin hair, his loose-limbed, stupid way, his long stories. After all, why not? Nobody cared. Here was someone she could get—someone who thought she was superior, just as she had thought the others were superior. Why, of course. Alec Timmons. Avelon Addition. She'd be where she belonged, near Estelle, in the same social level into which she had been born. She had tried

to get ahead, to do well for herself. She had tried awfully hard. She had tried for position, for comfort, for love. Well, at least, now she could get what other girls of her station wanted—a husband who could support her.

No one would ever laugh at her for marrying Alec Timmons. Why, no one she cared about would hardly know she had married. Married. It was time. She wasn't as pretty as she had been. Pretty enough for Alec Timmons, but not as pretty as she had been even last year. Next month was May, her birthday. Twenty-five. Well, she could catch some sort of a fish, after all. A fish—Alec Timmons.

She put on the little cream-colored hat that she had got just a year ago—she hadn't bought many new clothes this Spring—and went down stairs.

"All ready, Alec," she called, gaily.

[The End]



Halves

By Charles Divine

*WE'VE lived by halves, of sorrow, mirth,
And sung our songs that echoed far;
We thought they reached another earth,
Our love attained another star.*

*But here's a road I take alone—
More roads there are than songs to sing.
O, half of love is never known,
And half of life's remembering.*



Reflections

By *W. L. Werner*

I

MAN is superior to other animals because he has a mind. A large part of this mind's work is devoted to pride in his superiority, efforts to measure his superiority, and pity for inferior creatures. In this way man keeps the gap between himself and other animals exceedingly small.

II

LIFE is perfectly balanced. The most beautiful girls marry earliest and so are most quickly worn by the cares of wifehood and motherhood.

III

THIS is the greatest of ages. There have been periods of finer sculpture or loftier philosophy or more enduring architecture or nobler literature or more sensuous music. Our virtue is speed; by going fast enough we are sure that we shall arrive somewhere.

It should be a prison offense to laugh at a horse running on a treadmill.

IV

To say that a man lacks a sense of humor is universally an insult. Men are proud of the cowardice that ridicules the unusual and the prison that confines them to normality. . . . In the same manner many prisoners spend their time polishing and admiring their chains.

V

WHAT could be more silly and disgusting than a ten years' war for the possession of one woman? Yet it is the theme of our greatest epic.

VI

IN pain and misery we are born, grow old and die. We are named and married and buried to the accompaniment of words mumbled by a man in a black gown. . . . The thing that carries us through is the hope that we may live again.

VII

A LAW is a remedy concocted for evils of yesterday or a hundred years ago, and applied to the troubles of today. . . . Little Johnnie lay sick with scarlet fever. "There is no use going to the doctor," said his dear mother. "We can give him some of the mumps pills that we used last year."

VIII

DENYING the wisdom of centuries, the modern woman has discovered that marriage for money is a Crying Evil. People should marry for love and be independent in other respects. . . . Yet love is simply an emotion, swelling and ebbing, at decent intervals. If marriages are to be more or less secure and families are to be preserved, other bonds are necessary. Among these bonds are friendship, respect, common interests and economic necessity—and the strongest of these is money.

IX

THE jury system is the epitome of democracy. It is based on the idea that a compromise between twelve men, each a little wrong, will approximate justice. The smaller the crime, the more nearly correct this idea is. But it fails as soon as the crime is committed against

a community, a nation or a race. Then the twelve react as one man; there is no compromise between extremes, and the one possible just verdict has small chance among a hundred equally probable unjust decisions.

X

It is characteristic of man's befuddled

state of mind that he considers woman a peculiar and mysterious creature. He roams the world, creates beauty, uncovers knowledge, is worn by a thousand passions, and then he returns home to marvel at the simple creature that bears his children. . . Only a peculiar, mysterious and complex mind could marvel so at simplicity.



Recompense

By Walter B. Lister

WHEN I married you
I thought your eyes were like pearls half drowned in salt water
Your skin like living silk
Your breath like the kiss of a June morning in an orchard
Your love like benediction in candle-light.

Now,
Though I have seen your eyes in the morning
And paid your massage bills,
And bear the marks of your teeth;
Yet . . . I thank God,
For there can never be another illusion like you.



EVERY man sleeps one-third of the day's twenty-four hours. His respectability depends upon which one-third.



SCALES—the article which a butcher uses for a thumb rest.



The Scar

By *Andreas Latzko*

Author of "*Men in War*"

I

THE rockets hissed above the park. Colored lights flooded castle and lawn, now with a blood-red glow, now with a ghastly green. Shouting, laughing, the clinking of glasses, the din of the village band, all united into one provocative confusion, more exciting than heavy wine.

On the terrace the wedding guests were standing. Uniforms and decorations glittered in sudden flashes of the fireworks. Like a stately white pleasure yacht gracefully gliding past ragged brown fishing boats, the tempered gaiety of the guests floated above the servants' and villagers' noisy mirth.

The last keg was being tapped on the lawn. On the terrace the lackeys made their last round with foaming champagne glasses. Then—a roaring farewell toast, a merging together of all the guests at the foot of the great stairs, many handshakes, a momentary eclipse of the white bridal gown among the heavy folds of the old countess' dark moiré, and the automobile sped off. Through a lane formed by intoxicated villagers it passed, accompanied by frantic brandishing of handkerchiefs, by inarticulate cheers, until it threw itself upon the moonlit highway and, rapidly consuming the pale length, purred with satisfaction like a feeding beast.

The two fortunate ones in the car closed their eyes as by mutual agreement. They were tired. The imprints of innumerable handclasps still lingered on their fingers, a dividing sea of exclamations, congratulations, unfinished

sentences, still surged between them. Each retired into silence, to gain distance from all these irrelevancies, to find back their own fundamentals.

The time passed. They listened to the rhythm of the racing motor. They saw sleeping fields and villages flit by at lightning speed. Yet neither dared the first step on the bridge which was to unite them. They seemed paralyzed in anxious helplessness.

Angrily the young baron fought against this strange cowardice. He could not understand himself. Good heavens, this was not his first experience! Never before had he failed quickly to find the hidden path which leads to the flower of heart's desire. . .

Was it perhaps just this memory of former loves, feverish caresses, mad whisperings, his very expertness which intimidated him?

Why remember all this now? She, who now sat at his side, had been his playmate since childhood days, had ridden with him, even fifteen years ago, on a galloping pony along this very road. By birth, bringing up, tastes, outlook, they belonged together. Hundreds of mutual recollections were spread, like a costly rug, before their bridal bed. And the wish to weave their lives together was almost as old as themselves.

And yet! Every phrase of endearment that rose to his lips had the bitter flavor of having been used too often before. He would not allow the adventures of his bachelor days to mingle with this, his supreme night of love. Deeply he felt that he was to coin a memory now, a memory which was to

remain living and glorious in both of them, flaming over all the everyday habits which were to follow.

Where the moonlit highway merged into black masses of trees, two red spots now became visible—the wedding torches at the gates of his estate. And, at last, the words: "We are almost home!" came, spontaneously, to his lips.

Immediately the pleasant feeling of having said the right thing brought relief from all constraint. Never before had the word "home" sounded to him so full of deep meaning. The thought occurred to him that somewhere in the depths of his being a secret drawer must suddenly have sprung open, in which the longing for a true home had laid hidden until to-night.

He reached for her little hand and fervently pressed it. Then he put on his helmet, all ready to help her alight. And his impatient thoughts outflowed the speeding car. He saw how they would arrive. At the gates his old valet only was to receive them, the same who had carried his parents' wedding torch. On the first floor Kitty's maid stood waiting. Tea was served for two in the blue room. Then all the servants would disappear. Even in servants' hall there was to be no light, no sound, until morning. . .

He bent over the silent, beautiful girl by his side and, slipping his arm around her, crushed her to his heart.

The car now sped up the last steep incline. The park gates opened wide. Out jumped his young Newfoundland dog, barking and wagging, right into the path of the machine.

"Stop!" the baron wanted to shout. But the word broke off.

A terrific force had hurled him forward, and the point of his helmet shattered the heavy plate glass to splinters.

A moment later he regained consciousness. He realized he was unhurt, staggered to rise, to steady himself—and with maddening terror wondered what must have become of her, bare-headed, save for her veil and myrtle wreath!

He seemed stunned, could not comprehend.

He saw the chauffeur, pale as death, tugging at a white mass on the floor of the car—saw a dark red serpent creeping heavily over crumpled lace veils—saw servants running up in alarm—

Then a dreadful cry rose high above the dull hubbub of many agitated voices. He had seen them: lift her out, had seen the beloved head dangling, lifeless, thickly clotted with blood!

Crazed, he followed them, his knees giving way under him at every step. A sobbing was in his throat which nearly suffocated him, his hands grasped the air, his lips repeated her name over and over again.

Finally they reached the castle; they got upstairs.

In feverish haste he began to search for bandages, restoratives, nearly tore the telephone box off the wall in his vain efforts to get a physician. Desperately he stumbled downstairs again, and actually found a moment's respite as he struck the chauffeur squarely in the face because the man tried to prevent his entering the car.

The baron did not even notice that the lights had been smashed. He grasped the wheel. He let the machine go at full speed.

Like a deadly enemy the wind rushed against his breast. Obstacles, screams, curses, barking of dogs, everything was swallowed in the blackness of the night, the hammering of the motor. The car reared and leaped. It had run over a living thing. A dog? A man? What did it matter! Before his eyes swayed the lifeless head of his bride. And in the solitude of the thundering ride he sobbed uninterruptedly, as though murmuring an endless prayer: "Little girl! . . . My little girl! . . . My little girl! . . . My little girl! . . . My little girl! . . ."

Unknown to himself, memories had come to life within him, had taken hold of the wheel, and finally stopped the car before the sanatorium in which his late mother had once been successfully operated.

He jumped out and found the door-keeper.

Unable to speak coherently, he drove the man before him with his fists, himself pounded at the physician's bedroom door, stammered a few unconnected words of explanation, beseeched, commanded, threatened, and ever repeated in hoarse desperation: "Quick! Quick! She is dying! She is bleeding to death!"

At last the physician and a nurse were ready; the necessary instruments, bandages and drugs had been packed.

Running ahead, the baron lead the way to his car. Then once more he tore away at terrific rate, unheeding the protests of his frightened passengers.

On he rushed into the darkness, taking the curves with undiminished dizziness of speed. With a crash the right guard was torn off. Through the shattered window the physician's hands frantically shook his shoulder. But the baron paid no attention. Clutching the wheel, he sat immobile, as one possessed, his jaws set, his eyes burning into the black distance, as though they could attract his goal.

At last, in the cool dawn of early morning he saw his castle floating toward him, found his mother-in-law's machine standing at the entrance, heard that his wife was still alive—and broke down, no longer master of his nerves.

II

For five days and five nights death hovered over her bed. The baron sat downstairs in the wide hall, his eyes empty, his mustache between trembling fingers. On soundless soles the nurse flitted through the long corridors, carrying basins with blood-stained bandages. At the meals his mother-in-law alone sat with him, stiffly drawn up, a strange animosity in her face, as though he were to be blamed for her daughter's misfortune.

Never a word was spoken. In dumb suspense the baron waited for a sign of encouragement or sympathy, and her icy silence plunged him into deeper despair.

S. S.—Aug.—3

The deadly solitude became intolerable. He beseeched the physician to admit him into his wife's room. He wanted the contact of the beloved being. He wanted to share her suffering, perhaps to mitigate it by his presence. But the old countess opposed with inexplicable obstinacy. He was made to feel that he stood in everybody's way, utterly useless and forsaken. Finally, in desperation, he ordered his horse to be saddled, and rode to his regiment in town.

"Bear it like a soldier!" said the colonel, patting his shoulder. His friends, with sympathetic grimaces, murmured words of condolence or tried to divert him with forced gaiety. The baron gnashed his teeth, scenting malignant satisfaction at his misfortune.

As he rode out of the barracks again he imagined grinning faces behind his back. He had had too much luck! Himself rich, he had carried off the richest, most beautiful girl in the neighborhood. No doubt they felt that accounts had been straightened out at last!

Dull rage gnawed at him on his ride home. He remembered Kitty's coming-out ball in Vienna. How everybody had gone mad over the ravishing, high-spirited little witch! And now... Venomous envy had wished this tragedy on him! But he was not the man meekly to submit. He would, he must revenge himself on somebody! As he entered the park gates, he had decided to shoot his Newfoundland dog, to horsewhip the chauffeur of his estate.

Before he reached the castle he was met by his mother-in-law. Jumping out of the saddle, he greeted her, his heart in his throat, his eyes anxiously scanning her hard chiselled face.

"The physician wishes to see you."

"Did—did—anything happen to Kitty. . ."

A shrug of the shoulders was her only reply as she turned from him.

The baron did not take the trouble to revolt against this undeserved hostility. Driven by the dark presentiment that something dreadful was in store for him, he rushed up the stairs.

His heart almost stood still when the physician began to speak. But did he not say that all danger was past? Why then must he continue to look out of the window in this furtive manner, as though he did not dare to meet his eyes? What could he have to conceal? He must know the whole truth at last!

"Doctor—I beg you—tell me the whole truth—everything—Why...?"

Fear broke off his sentence. The whole high room seemed filled with choking terrors. And heavily, uncouthly, the words dropped from the physician's lips, like sinister reptiles, slowly uncurling themselves, and creeping toward him with hidden fangs:

"Yes—I am deeply grieved, my dear baron—we have done what was humanly possible. The wound was very deep and jagged, from the left ear across the cheek, cutting the cartilage of the nose, down to the right corner of the mouth. Important muscles have been severed. I fear—you will have to reconcile yourself to the unfortunate fact—that your wife's face is forever disfigured."

Disfigured! Nothing else? The baron's eyes filled with grateful tears.

"May I go to her now?" he asked impatiently, his hand already on the doorknob.

Hesitating, the physician shrugged his shoulders, pointed politely backward, then stepped away.

The baron, turning, saw his mother-in-law confront him. Pale, bitter, she seemed turned to stone in an agony of fear and hatred. And her words hissed and bit:

"Control yourself, that is all I ask of you. Control yourself for a few weeks only, until she will have grown a bit stronger, more able to bear her cruel fate. Then I shall take her back home with me. For no one expects you to live with her in her present condition. Only now control yourself, so she won't guess the truth."

The baron did not at once understand. His eyes erred blankly from the countess' menacing face to the physician's receding figure.

Finally he realized that, somehow, he had been attacked, insulted, that he must defend himself against ignoble insinuations. At the same time, subconsciously, he felt an icy alarm creep through his veins. Yet he could not visualize the dreadful possibility. His powers of imagination failed. He saw before him the adorably mischievous face of his Kitty, and next to it the seamed-up cheek of some duellist of his acquaintance. But to combine the two, to imagine that red scar on his bride's rose-petal-skin, that was impossible.

At last he found the power to speak. He drew himself to his full height. His eyes flashed haughtily.

"Kitty is my wife!" he cried. "No one shall take her from me!"

It braced him to hear his own voice, so clear and keen, it gave him back all his self-assurance. With an imperious gesture he brushed aside his mother-in-law, and entered the sick-room.

The sun was streaming in.

At first he saw her bare arms only. White and dazzling in their slender beauty, they were stretched out to greet him. A great joy filled his heart. He wanted to rush toward her . . . then his eyes beheld her face, and the sight paralyzed him, made a horrible nausea rise to his lips.

This was impossible! . . . This . . . was a spectre, a monster! It could never—

"Rudi!" she cried anxiously—"Rudi! Have I become so very homely? Tell me the truth, Rudi! They have taken away all the mirrors. . . ."

It was her voice. And those were her eyes, large, brown, velvety, now filled with agonized questions.

With supreme effort he pulled himself together, rushed toward her, and throwing himself on his knees beside the bed, embraced the girlish body with both arms, hid his face upon her breast. As the perfume of her enveloped him, a great, mad, tenderness welled up in his heart and struggled to his lips.

"Darling! My poor little adored darling! Has she suffered very much?"

But she pushed him from her, wanted

to see his eyes, and repeated with sobs: "Tell me, am I very, very homely? Tell me the truth!"

A chill down his back revealed to the baron that they no longer were alone, that his mother-in-law was intently watching him. Collecting his wits, he threw his head back and forced an infatuated smile upon his lips.

"I must look at her eyes, her dear eyes only—" he told himself.

But it was impossible. The frightful scar drew his gaze down to the cruelly marred nose, the twisted mouth, which gave the whole countenance a sneering, evil expression.

"Rudi tell me! . . . I want a mirror!"

Her beloved voice helped him out of his horror, brought back a thousand memories of teasing, tender sympathy, scarcely subdued passion.

"But, my darling! Won't you always be my darling, no matter what has happened?" he cried. And the fervor he artificially put into his voice, convinced himself.

He clearly understood that first of all he *must* convince himself, must realize, must feel, that the woman before him actually was Kitty, the adored one, the desired one, the playmate of his childhood, the love of his youth, his wife! Was it not her personality he had loved, her whole soul, her whole body? Should a cut across the face have power to annihilate everything, the devotion of his heart and the fire of his love?

"You are beautiful, darling, beautiful—" Unconsciously he closed his eyes, succeeded once more in seeing the Kitty, whom he had desired; and the contact of her brought back the old intoxication. But she did not even notice that his kisses were growing more and more eager. Over his head, she stretched her arms toward her mother.

"Give me a mirror, mama! I must have a mirror!" Her voice was almost threatening.

"Be patient a little longer, my child. Wait just a few more days. The stitches are still so fresh. Once they

are healed one will notice very little. Why excite yourself uselessly?"

The words were soothing and convincing. The baron turned quickly, almost hopefully. But the look that met him, wrung his heart. Pity and tenderness for the tortured mother surged up in him. He jumped to his feet and clasped the hostile old lady to his heart. Gaining strength from his burning desire to help, he cried with well acted gaiety:

"Yes, mama, we can thank God that it is nothing worse! Now we may as well confess that we feared terrible things during these days and nights of suspense. . . ."

The old countess' lips moved dumbly. She did not trust herself to speak. She turned and stepped to the window, and only the slight trembling of her shoulders betrayed her emotion.

The baron was satisfied with himself. At the same time his subtler sensibilities rebelled at this satisfaction. Was he actually crude enough to congratulate himself on having done the obvious, the only possible thing? The woman he loved had been overtaken by a frightful misfortune. Was it not natural that he should love her more than ever since she needed him more than ever?

But this was cold reasoning, mere logic. It did not count. Spontaneous feeling alone has value in a case like this. And what were his real feelings? He could not tell. The satisfaction of having proved himself a true nobleman was uppermost in him, seemed stronger than either his compassion or his desires. And when, later, in the great ancestral hall, the old countess threw herself into his arms in a paroxysm of grief and gratefulness, he detected a certain condescension in his words of consolation, which filled him with torturing distrust of his own sincerity.

III

THE afternoon of his mother-in-law's departure had arrived. The baron accompanied her to the automobile,

then stood a long while staring after it. Now he and Kitty were left alone. How he had longed for this, how different he had expected it to be! In spite of the warm summer air he felt cold, as the duties he had so nobly shouldered suddenly appeared before him in all their enormity. Those duties he would have to carry throughout a whole long life—throughout *his* whole life!

He did not regret having accepted them. He knew beyond a doubt that he could not have acted otherwise. He felt the absolute truth of the words he had just told to his mother-in-law; that he loved Kitty as much as ever, that he had not married merely a doll, a pretty face. And yet. . . .

Somehow he realized that he could not return to the castle, could not face his wife just then. First he must quiet the storm within him, must put himself in harmony with the stern rhythm of his fate. Slowly he strolled into the solitude of the park.

At the tennis court he halted. It had been thoroughly renovated before the wedding, but now once more was overgrown with weeds. How often Kitty had played here! He saw her, a tom-boy flapper, with flying braids. He saw her, a young lady, tall, slender, and graceful. But her face. . . . He could no longer see it the way it had been before the accident. Across all his memories ran the hideous scar, red, puffy, and distorting. At first he had had to look at her again and again to make sure that this ghastly grimace had taken the place of her adored, often kissed, delicate little face. Now it was just the other way. The memory of her beauty was slipping from him. The twisted, scarred, grotesque countenance had become the real Kitty.

The baron bowed his head. Sadly he walked on, made the usual evening round of the stables, then, grieving, stood still again. Before him was the great lilac thicket in which he and Kitty had often played at hide-and-seek. It was here, amid the fragrant blossoms, that she had let him kiss her for the

first time. She was eleven years old, he fifteen—and with droll earnestness they had vowed eternal love.

The thought seized him that, perhaps, it had been better if—he had lost her altogether. The memory of her lovely, roguish, little face at least would have remained with him! He could have mourned for her with undiminished—

He started at the thought, pulled himself together, clenched his fists. The resolution to overcome all obstacles, to give himself with the same passionate affection with which he had desired her throughout their engagement, fired his soul. And with new energy he set out for the castle.

As he emerged on the wide lawn, he saw his bride's maid rushing toward him, gesticulating frantically.

"For God's sake!" she cried, "Quick! Quick! My lady has—is—"

A thousand pictures raced through his brain, as he flew up the stairs. He saw her dead. Saw himself kneeling beside her body. And boundless pity with himself filled his heart. Then he found her. She was lying, unconscious, on the floor of his room, her right hand still clutching his shaving mirror.

* * *

He carried her back into her room, placed her on the bed. She soon regained consciousness. But then a terrific struggle began, lasting for hours. She wanted to return to her mother at once—wanted to die! Screaming, she repeated that she could not live like this, a scarecrow, a spectre—a burden to herself, a dishonor to him!

During this struggle the baron quite found himself again. His desperate attempts to convince her, his hunt for arguments to contradict her, forced him away from his own feelings, into the belief that what he said was actually true.

"And if the accident had happened to me, would you have stopped loving me on account of a scar across the face? Be reasonable, darling. Our love does not date from yesterday.

Aren't you my little girl, my love, my wife?"

He held her close, the perfume of her went to his head, his kisses grew ever more vehement. . . .

IV

MORNING dawned when the baron awakened and searchingly bent over his sleeping wife. Again the aspect of her face struck him a staggering blow. No love, no sense of duty, could save him from the horror that shuddered through his whole being. Ever, for ever, this face beside him? Not only in his privacy, but in public, too, on the street, in society, on travels, always this face at his side, united to him, a part of him, an important part! "My wife,"—how often would he have to introduce her, and always see the shock on the face of the new acquaintance.

He could remain in bed no longer. Slipping from her side, he went into his own room and leaned far out of the window.

Slowly the park was emerging from darkness. Dawn wove trees and thickets into the shifting, misty grays.

The baron, shivering in the cool breeze, tried to plan the scenery for his future. He must begin an entirely new life, so much was certain. A house without windows—that was what their married life would have to be. No social intercourse of any kind would be possible. And never should she guess his sufferings! His whole life must be devoted to alleviate her misery, since he had not been able to prevent it.

Resplendently the sun arose. The sun, after his long dreamed of first night of love with his wife! And like a vulture the thought descended upon him that he felt as though he came from a funeral.

All his hopes had been buried! His pride in Kitty's unusual, provocative beauty, all his plans for their life together—buried forever! Steep, stony, joyless, his path stretched before him. No outlook into smiling valleys, no hope of a happy goal. Panting and painful

he would have to climb, his face turned from all beauty and pleasure, forever fearful that the thought might occur to her how much happier he could be without her.

Would it be possible to live that way? To abandon all loveliness and gladness forever? And even if he should succeed, would she not become jealous anyway; jealous of every woman whose unmarred face smiled at him? What demoniac power had this scar, that it could disfigure his whole past and future, crawling like a poisonous spider, red, swollen, and nimble, over his entire life?

With a heavy sigh of despair, the baron turned from the window. He threw himself upon his bed in exhaustion. The cool sheets received him, pitying and soothing. And instantly a deep, dreamless sleep brought relief from all tortures.

He lay like one dead. He did not hear the creaking of the door. He did not feel the stare of wild, desperate, tearless eyes.

With tormented face the young wife sat on the chair beside his bed. And intently she studied the sleeper.

How handsome he was! The straight nose, the narrow, sternly curved lip. From the line of the hair across the high strong brow, down to the firmly modelled chin, he seemed chiselled by a master hand. And beside this perfect face she was to put her hideous grimace! Who would be able to see them together without pitying him, without blaming her? How could she be impudent enough to fetter such a man to herself?

He slept on, peacefully, motionless, while her eyes were riveted upon his forehead. She wanted to divine his dreams, his thoughts. Had his words been the truth—or had he spoken merely out of pity, to quiet her? She did not doubt that he still loved her. But how long could it last? She remembered his pride at her social triumphs. How would he be able to bear with a disfigured wife who must ever hide her ghastly scar behind thick veils?

How would she herself feel in his place? Would she not suffer at the thought of having a pitiable creature by her side instead of the dashing officer whom all women envied her? "Would you really love me less on account of a scar?" he had asked her. And in bitter anguish she probed her heart for an answer. She did not wish to spare herself. She tried hard to imagine the thick red scar, the crippled nose, the twisted mouth, in his symmetrical face. . . . But she failed.

The sight of his beauty became intolerable to her. It reminded her of all the love adventures she had heard whispered about him. She had dismissed them lightly with the triumphant self-reliance her own loveliness gave her. But now? If he should become interested in another woman now? The mere thought of the possibility roused all the furies of jealous rage within her. And she had to admit to herself that not her face alone had suffered. Her soul had become distorted. Over her whole being stretched, hideously, the scar!

Very pale, she arose. She reached for the army revolver which hung above his bed. How heavy and cold it was. Like a great, cruel eye the ball glared at her through the barrel. Into the temple . . . ? No! That was impossible! The thought of the terrific impact, of other awful things, robbed her of all courage. But—into the heart!

With the left hand she groped for her heart, with the right she held the weapon, while her eyes, steadfastly, were fixed upon her husband's face. She pictured to herself how he would awake with a bound, how he would cry for help—but it would be too late. And then the ruined face would be forgotten. Memory would efface all ugliness. He would remember her only as—as—

Fiercely, she let the revolver sink. For her thoughts had sped on, had showed her the young widower, besieged, pampered, courted by sympathetic women. What eagerness to become his comforter! How beauty and

charm and desire would crowd around him! And with the same mad passion with which he had inflamed her last night, he would embrace another . . . !

No! That must not be! Why should every torture be for her *alone*? The agony of the wound, the frightful scar, and death, too, and being forgotten—while his portion would be only a short grief, soon mellowed, finally nothing but a tenderly mournful plaything for sentimental hours, an added allurements to attract still more women. She gnashed her teeth.

Ah, if only he had put on his helmet two minutes later, he also—

Also—?

The little word sprang upon her, seemed to choke her. How different everything would have been if he also . . . ! No suspicion, no jealousies, no shame, no considerate lies. Mutual effort to make life worth living for each other, intensified tenderness, a still closer union behind the wall which their misfortune raised between the world and themselves. Then life and happiness would still be possible. But this way? Impossible. Im-possible!

She stepped over to his dressing-table to find the hidden shaving mirror and see herself once more in all her awfulness. And again her blood ran cold at sight of the Gorgon's face she was condemned to wear and to show.

Impossible!

As she put down the mirror, the baron's razor flamed up, blood-red, in a ray of the morning sun.

Like the thrust of a sword this vision struck her. Her eyes began wildly to wander from the glittering blade to the sleeping man, and back again.

Slowly her face hardened in hatred and horror, her breath came tumultuously, her heart hammered until the whole slender body was quivering. Then, with abrupt decision, she leapt toward the bed, firmly set the razor upon her husband's temple and, cutting deep into the brown cheek, across the nose and down to the mouth, she traced upon his face the exact replica of her scar.

Répétition Générale

By George Jean Nathan and H. L. Mencken

§ 1

COSMETICAL.—My barber tells me that my eye-brows are growing and that by the time I am fifty they will be very thick and bushy and probably of an iron-gray tint. The news is not without its consolations. Heavy eye-brows are always accepted by the world as evidences of inner illumination, and for two plain reasons. First, they look assertively masculine and bellicose, and secondly, they shade the eyes and so give them a deep and mysterious appearance. At forty, no matter how profoundly I discourse, I am mistaken for a comedian, and the crowd snickers. At fifty, no matter what wheezes I loose, I shall be taken for a philosopher, and the crowd will respect me as it now respects Mr. Harding and Robert Mantell. Shave off the bushy eye-brows of these eminent men, and even a chautauqua audience would laugh at them.

§ 2

And Nothing Happens.—In the last half-dozen years, rarely a month has passed that the one or the other of us has not received a letter from some wealthy admirer, whom certain of our animadversions have tickled, to the general effect that he is deeply grateful for all the pleasure we have given him. The great majority of these wealthy admirers are old boys of from seventy-five to ninety and we often say to each other: "This particular gent appears to venerate us so highly that it wouldn't surprise us at all to learn, upon his demise, that he has remembered us handsomely

in his last will and testament." Surely after hearing from such a pleasant fellow for months and years on end, and after reading regularly his apparently sincere and honest appreciations, this is not an entirely grotesque assumption. Yet when each of these amiable ancients shuffles off the coil and we peruse the newspapers closely for the next two weeks, we find that he invariably leaves \$8,000 to his servant girl, or \$15,000 to his oldest clerk, or \$20,000 to the Home for Disabled Fruit-Steamer Sailors—none of whom have, by his own testimony, given him half the pleasure that we have—and not one damned cent to us. We are genuinely sorry to see such fellows pass away; we actually grow to be fond of them; and we never fail—perhaps not wholly from unselfish anticipatory motives—to send a \$10 bunch of flowers to the funeral. But nothing ever happens.

§ 3

Sentimental Interlude.—After the fifth highball X. selected a long, thin cigar, lighted it carefully, and said: "Nietzsche (I believe it was Nietzsche) called women the recreation of the warrior. A profound saying. They are invariably a nuisance when serious business is afoot, but what could be more charming than the mere music of their voices when the job is done, and the time has come to stretch out and dream? Every man, I daresay, has his own notion of what constitutes perfect joy, but all of those notions, at least among civilized men, revolve around women. As for me, I reject the two commonest of them: passion is usually too exciting

and alarming for me, and I have been a bachelor so long that I have lost the desire to be mothered. Well, what remains for me? Let me try to describe it to you.

"It is the close of a busy and vexatious day—say 5.30 or 6 o'clock. I have had a cocktail or two, and am stretched out on a divan in front of a fire, smoking a good cigar. At the edge of the divan, close enough for me to reach her with my hand, sits a woman not too young, but still good-looking and well-dressed—above all, a woman with a soft, low-pitched, agreeable voice. As I snooze she talks—of anything, everything, all the things that women talk of: books, music, the play, men, other women. No politics. No business. No religion. No philosophy. Nothing challenging and vexatious—but, remember, she is intelligent: what she says is clearly expressed, and often picturesque. I observe the fine sheen of her hair, the pretty cut of her frock, the glint of her white teeth, the arch of her eye-brow, the graceful curve of her arm. I listen to the exquisite murmur of her voice. Gradually I fall asleep—but only for an instant. At once, observing it, she raises her voice ever so little, and I am awake. Then to sleep again—slowly and charmingly down that slippery hill of dreams. And then awake again, and then asleep again, and so on.

"I ask you seriously: could anything be more unutterably beautiful? The sensation of falling asleep is to me the most exquisite in the world. I delight in it so much that I even look forward to death itself with a sneaking wonder and desire. Well, here is sleep poetized and made doubly sweet. Here is sleep set to the finest music in the world. I match this situation against any that you can think of. It is not only enchanting; it is also, in a very true sense, ennobling. In the end, when the girl grows prettily miffed and throws me out, I return to my sorrows somehow purged and glorified. I am a better man in my own sight. I have grazed upon the fields of asphodel. I have been

genuinely, completely and unregrettably happy."

§ 4

"*All the News That's Fit to Print.*"—Upon the production of Ferenc Molnar's play "Liliom" by the Theater Guild in New York a few months ago, the *New York Times*' dramatic department, with its practised cosmopolitan gesture, thus sapiently informed its public:

1. The play never saw the light of European production until the war.
2. The leading rôle was created by Mr. Joseph Schildkraut, who plays the rôle in the American production.
3. Molnar never intended the play for theatrical production.

The facts are as follows:

1. The play was produced in the Vigszház, Budapest, in the same year that it was written; and the following year in the Josefstädter-theater, Vienna.
2. The leading rôle was created, in the Budapest production, by the Hungarian actor, Hegedüs, and, in the Viennese production, by the celebrated Austrian actor, Jarno.
3. The play is a dramatization of a story by Molnar named "Liliom," and was made to order for quick theatrical production.

§ 5

Tip for Freud.—I find myself almost incapable of being vindictive. The notions that I like to toy with are offensive to a great many men, and I am far too vain to conceal them prudently; hence I am often denounced roundly, and sometimes genuine damage is inflicted on me. Nevertheless, I do not bear grudges, and when the chance offers to get revenge upon an enemy—as happens not unseldom—I usually let it go without using it. Superficially, this magnanimity has a noble smack; in fact, there are plenty of folks who esteem me for it, and I myself, when I have been drinking, slap my chest and posture obscenely as one stuffed with chivalrous impulses. But in quiet, introspective moments the whole thing begins to take on a ludicrous aspect. My

lack of vindictiveness, I venture to guess, is simply due to the vanity aforesaid. When a man gets into a rage about some idea that I have set loose it flatters me doubly. First, I enjoy the sense of power, *i. e.*, the capacity to make him jump and snort. Secondly, the fact that he is horrified makes me feel superior to him, just as I feel superior to a man who is afraid of spiders, the devil, alcohol, women or the dark. Both sensations soothe and tickle my ego, which has an inordinate thirst for that sort of thing.

The same appetite explains my failure to seek revenge when the chance offers. It is certainly not because I am genuinely magnanimous, and hesitate to inflict suffering. On the contrary, I delight in inflicting suffering—at all events, psychical suffering—and spend a great deal of my time deliberately inflicting it. As I say, it pleases me to see the poor idiots jump and to hear them snort. I can imagine no better use to put the general run of men to; if they hadn't this talent for jumping and snorting they'd be fit only for employment as cannon-fodder and fertilizer. But, with the chance directly before me, I often refrain from torturing them. Why? Simply because it makes me feel superior to let them go. I know what *they* would do in like case—that is, if *I* had injured *them*, and they had a clear opportunity to get revenge. They'd yield to their emotions and fall on me with yells. Well, I measure superiority in terms of the capacity to throttle emotions. I esteem a man who invariably keeps his head, even when a crocodile is after him, or the band is playing, or some woman has her arms around his neck. So I leave the field without firing, and walk off with a lofty and bombastic air.

But do I practise this restraint because I happen to admire men who always show it, or do I admire such men because the thing itself is natural to me? In brief, is a man's character congenital, or is it shaped by his environment and tradition? Somewhere or other I have a note discussing and an-

swering this question, but at the moment I can't find it, and so the matter must lie over.

§ 6

The Scales of Intelligence.—In the advertising section of a recent number of *Scribner's Magazine*, I find the following in 20-point capitals:

"*The Surest Way To Judge The Intelligence Of A Family Is By The Books They Read!*"

Books which Charles Scribner's Sons then specifically recommend as criteria of a family's intelligence are those of the following authors:

1. Richard Harding Davis.
2. John Ames Mitchell.
3. Thomas Nelson Page.
4. James Whitcomb Riley.
5. Henry Van Dyke.
6. F. Hopkinson Smith.

§ 7

On the Human Mind.—The older I grow the more I distrust the familiar doctrine that age brings wisdom. It is my honest belief that I am no wiser today than I was five years ago; in fact, I often suspect that I am appreciably *less* wise. Women can prevail over me today by devices that would have made me hoof them out of my studio when I was thirty-five. I am also an easier mark for male swindlers than I used to be; at fifty I'll probably be joining clubs and buying Mexican mine stock. The truth is that every man goes uphill in sagacity to a certain point, and then begins sliding down again. Nearly all the old fellows that I know are more or less balmy. Theoretically, they should be much wiser than younger men, if only because of their greater experience, but actually they seem to take on folly faster than they take on wisdom. A man of thirty-five or thirty-eight is almost woman-proof. For a woman to marry him is a herculean feat. But by the time he is fifty he is quite as easy as a Yale sophomore. On other planes the same decay of the intelligence is

visible. Certainly it would be difficult to imagine any committee of youngsters, say of thirty, showing the unbroken childishness, lack of humor and irrational prejudices of the Supreme Court of the United States. The average age of the learned justices must be at least sixty, and all of them are supposed to be of extraordinary acumen. Nevertheless, their decisions are often so illogical and nonsensical that it is difficult to read them without blowing one's nose sadly.

§ 8

Romantic Man.—Man is ineradicably a romantic creature. It is absolutely necessary for him to romanticize one thing or another. If it isn't a woman, it is a country. If it isn't a country, it is another man. If it isn't some other man whom he engaulds with his worshipping admiration, it is himself. If it isn't himself, it is his home-life, or his dog, or the camaraderie of his club, or his college, or his business, or the cover of a magazine. A woman may romanticize a man, but she usually stops there. In the matter of the majority of things that a man romanticizes, she is a cynic.

§ 9

After the Victory.—Years ago I predicted that the suffragettes, once they got the vote, would turn out to be idiots. They are now hard at work proving it. Half of them are now raging through the hinterland, advocating reforms so extravagant that even politicians and newspaper editors laugh at them. The other half succumb absurdly to the blandishments of the old-time male politicians, and so enroll themselves in the two great job-grabbing organizations. What could be more ridiculous than a woman who becomes a Democrat or a Republican—or even a Liberal? She is simply a woman who becomes an imitation man, which is to say, an ass. Thereafter she is nothing more than a cog in an ancient and creaky machine. Her vote is instantly set off by the vote

of some sister who joins the other gang. Parenthetically, I may add that all of the more active and noisy ladies of this sort seem to be frightfully homely. I attended both of the national conventions last summer and observed both the lady Democrats and the lady Republicans very carefully. I am surely no fastidious fellow, but I give you my word that there were not five women at either convention who could have hugged me behind the palms without first giving me chloral. Some of the chief whisperers, in fact, were so downright hideous that I felt faint every time I saw them. In simple justice I should add that none of them actually tried to hug me.

The reform-monging suffragettes, so far as I have observed them, are equally devoid of the more fetching gifts. Nineteenths of them advocate reforms aimed at the alleged lubricity of the male—the single standard, medical certificates for bridegrooms, birth control, and so on. The motive here, I believe, lies invariably in mere rage and jealousy. The woman who is not pursued wants to make pursuit a felony. No genuinely pretty woman has any such desire. She likes masculine admiration, however violently expressed, and is quite able to take care of herself. More, she enjoys the admiration of men who have previously admired elsewhere; it is flattering to her self-esteem. The suffragette, if she gets a man at all, must get a man wholly without sentimental experience; if he has had any her crude manoeuvres make him laugh and he is repelled by her lack of feminine charm. All suffragettes (save a few miraculous beauties) marry ninth-rate men when they marry at all. They have to put up, indeed, with the sort of cast-offs who are almost ready to fall in love with lady embalmers.

Fortunately for the human race, the campaigns of these indignant viragoes will come to naught. Men will keep on pursuing women until hell freezes over, and women will keep on luring them on. If the latter enterprise were abandoned, in fact, the whole game of love would

play out, for not many men take any notice of women spontaneously. The notion that they do so is without sense. Nine men out of ten would be quite happy if there were no women in the world. Practically all men *are* their happiest when they are engaged upon activities—for example, drinking, gambling, hunting, business, adventure—to which women are not ordinarily admitted. It is women who seduce them from such celibate doings. The hare postures and gyrates in front of the hound. The way to put an end to all the gaudy doings that the suffragettes talk about is to shave the heads of all the pretty gals in the world, and pluck out their eyebrows, and pull out their teeth, and put them in overalls, and forbid them to wriggle on dance-floors, or to wear scents, or to use lip-sticks, or to roll their eyes. Reform, as usual, mistakes the fish for the fly.

§ 10

I Am Tired Of. . .—I am tired of poems entitled "Nocturne," of songs lauding the Irish, of the beribboned pink nightgowns I see in the windows of lingerie shops, of derogatory remarks on Harold Bell Wright, of people who speculate why John Philip Sousa hasn't written a good march for twenty years, of signing my full name to letters, of steak minute, of cleaning my safety razor every time I've used it, of girls who say they are sick of college boys and really admire only intelligent men, of cocktails made of makeshifts for gin, of persons who have no telephones, of belated admirers of Zuloaga, of Viennese operettas the leading waltz of which in the New York production is composed by Moe Wasserberg, of Blum, Wasserberg & Blum, the local music publishers; of photographs of the Prince of Wales, of hearing liars tell how cheaply one can get a bottle of vintage champagne these days in Paris, of people who go around saying that they know me after they have met me for ten minutes at some casual booze party, of mislaying my bathing suit every win-

ter and having to buy a new one every summer, of Americans who speak French, of D. W. Griffith's fulsome testimonials to himself, of men who tell me that So-and-So's home-made beer is in every respect the equal of Franziskanerbräu, of men who write in from Lutzville, Idaho, assuring me that they have always read with interest what I write and requesting me, in turn, to subscribe for "The Wallop: A Magazine, of Unbiased Opinion," the first number of which they have just edited and published, of advertisements in which a man is pointing a finger at me, of greasy book reviews that begin thus: "Contrasted with the turgid, psychoiogiical novels that jostle one another for a place on the main thoroughfare of contemporary fiction, Irving Bacheller's latest book, 'The Prodigal Village,' is a placid woodland lane; reading it is like stepping around a corner away from the hectic turbulence of a metropolis and finding one's self in a New England village—like exchanging the conversation of an accustomed cosmopolitan companion for that of an ingenuous, hearty rustic of a generation ago;" of the nudes in *La Vie Parisienne*, of the pasteboard containers in which they put charlottes russes, of idiots who ejaculate, "What's the big idea tonight?" when they encounter you in a dinner jacket, of other idiots who put on evening dress to go to the first performance of a play by some Broadway Ibsen, of writers of essays for *The Bookman* who affect the manner of Charles Lamb, of highly favorable reviews of my latest book by critics whom I have proclaimed jackasses and who thus try to show me what unbiased and liberal fellows they are, of women who have married their second or third choices and then call me up to tell me how happy they are, of writers who believe that they have pictured a character with sufficient illumination if they give him a heavy watch-chain, of men who send me cheques for three dollars and twenty-five cents elaborately and painstakingly protected against raising by means of indenting machines, perfor-

ating machines, numeral punches and paper-roughening devices, and of the newspaper accounts of lacrosse games.

§ 11

Footnote No. 672b.—In the common notion that pretty girls tend to be numskulls there is nothing save the libelous rancor of their homely sisters. The truth is that good looks, in a woman, are breeders of sagacity, for they always make their possessor good-humored, and good-humor is two-thirds of wisdom. Serenity, indeed, is the hallmark of the philosophical mind, and has been so for ages. A sound philosopher is serene simply because he has mastered the capital truth that most of the things he lacks are not worth striving for, and that most of the problems remaining unsolved are not worth solving. This is precisely the attitude of mind of a pretty girl. The great causes that fever and sweat her homely sisters do not trouble her; she regards them all as trivial. That judgment is sound; they are trivial. Thus her pulchritude gives her, along with its own intrinsic boons, the great gift of sapience. It is this that is meant by the saying, *Qui enim habet, dabitur ei*.

§ 12

Forty-five Minutes From Harlem.—From an authoritative paper by Professor Brander Matthews, A.B., LL.B., A.M., D.C.L., Litt.D., LL.D., and V.D.C. (volunteer dramatic critic), entitled "Thackeray and the Theater," appearing in a current periodical:

There remains to be mentioned only one other dramatization, that of the "Rose and the Ring," made by Mr. H. Savile Clark in 1890. From all accounts the performance of this little play, with its music by Mr. Walter Slaughter, provided a charming spectacle for children—one to which we may be sure that Thackeray would have had no objection and which indeed might have delighted his heart. Although the play was successful in London and although it has been revived there more than once, it has never been performed in

New York, by some unaccountable oversight on the part of American managers.

Referred to Mr. Tony Sarg, the management of the Punch and Judy Theater, and the many New York children for whom the little play provided a charming spectacle.

§ 13

Along These Lines.—It is a fallacy that one can most accurately tell a woman's age by the lines in her face. A country girl of twenty not infrequently has as many lines as a city woman of twice the age. There is perhaps only one way in which the age of a woman may be approximately determined, and that is through the things she laughs at and the manner in which she laughs at them. The way a girl laughs when she is nineteen, she ceases to laugh when she is twenty-five. The things a woman laughs at at forty, she doesn't laugh at at thirty. Take two girls, one of twenty and one of twenty-seven, who, despite the disparity in their years, look to be of the same age. Ask them simultaneously—and with a straight face—if they will permit you to kiss them on the back of the neck. The twenty year old girl will immediately laugh heartily at you; the twenty-seven year old girl will betray her greater age either by the forced, self-conscious and derisory note in her laughter, or by her failure to laugh at all.

§ 14

Meditation in the Twilight.—Some time ago a low fellow came to the conclusion that it would be a pretty fancy to spread the news that I had lately married. Accordingly, he imparted it to a bootlegger, the bootlegger told John Macy, Macy passed it on to another bootlegger, the other bootlegger handed it to Christopher Morley, and Morley printed it in the *Käseblatt* that he works for. That night a couple of telegrams of inquiry reached me; the next morning came four or five letters; the sec-

ond morning came perhaps twenty; the third morning came half a wash-basket full. During the ensuing week I read and answered those letters, and then retired to a milk-cure for a rest. Lying there on the hard board, the while my blood-pressure was being taken, a sudden thought occurred to me. It was this: that every single one of those letters treated my reported marriage as a joke—not as something to be taken gravely, but as something to be cackled and sniffed over! Ever since then the thought has haunted me. I don't know what to make of it. But this I do know: that it somehow makes me uncomfortable.

§ 15

Boola Boola.—From the London *Nation's* review of "The City," by Paul Claudel, translated from the French by John Strong Newberry (*Yale University Press*):

On the very first page we find an astonishing blunder. In the original, Lambert le Besme says that he follows the movements of the city "d'un œil aussi attentif que le savant dans un tourbillon étudie la giration des fœtus." Mr. Newberry solemnly translates this: "A sage in the vortex of a whirlwind, intent on the giration of the fœtus." One can only gasp. What can Mr. Newberry suppose that Claudel means? Obviously, nothing. But Claudel is a great poet, and great poets possess a divine right to talk nonsense and still be great. Nevertheless, if Mr. Newberry had taken the trouble to consult the smallest of Little Larousses he would have found that "un fœtu" means a straw. The poet is not using his divine right after all; he is just talking sense like an ordinary mortal, and the fine frenzy of those girating fœtuses calms down into a mere dance of motes. How a great university like Yale can put its *imprimatur* to such an imbecility passes the understanding. Has the Yale Press no proof-readers?

The Yale Press may protect itself by replying to this last question: "Of course, we have proof-readers! But they are Harvard men."

§ 16

Solo for the Oboe.—The idea that man is incapable of understanding

woman has been so successfully cultivated by women that man in the mass has come to take it for granted. The propaganda has been carried to the point where the man who today dares say that he understands women is set down by his fellowmen as a posturer, a brag, or a downright jackass. Women, privy to the facts, conceal their humorous embarrassment before such a man behind a screen of smiles. Men, not knowing what to make of him, wave him airily aside as they would an allusion to streptococci. He is regarded by them as not quite nice, although they don't exactly know why.

§ 17

The Ethical Conflict.—One of the hardest things for the human mind to grasp is the concept of ethical conflict—that is, the notion that there is more than one system of morality, and that the teachings of a system that is rejected may be quite as honest and quite as defensible logically as the teachings of the system that is accepted. The common run of men, in fact, are wholly unable to take in any such idea. They always convert their ethical principles into superstitions, and believe firmly that any man who rejects them is not only in error, but also deliberately antisocial. This is what makes the Puritan ethic so bellicose and offensive in the United States. It is a system that appeals very forcibly to inferior men, for it makes crimes of all of the enterprises that are beyond their enterprise, courage and imagination; its ideal criminal is the man who does habitually what the majority of men are quite incapable of doing. The United States being a democracy, such inferior men dominate its thought and its legislation. Hence the virulence of Puritanism among us. It not only denounces the acts of superior men; it seeks to make most of them physically impossible.

Unluckily, this Puritan ethical system has important gaps in it. That is

to say, it fails to prohibit whole categories of acts that are banned by other systems. In common with all other Christian systems, for example, it is extraordinarily tolerant of lying. Simple lying is nowhere made a crime in Christendom. Unless it involves an invasion of property rights it is not so much as mentioned in the Christian codes, and even then the matter is dealt with in a gingery manner, as is shown by the disinclination of the courts to formulate a clear definition of fraud. Moreover, there is no prohibition of lying in the Christian Decalogue. The Christian is forbidden to call upon his God to bear witness to his lies, but he is not forbidden to lie if he omits that blasphemy. There are many other omissions in the Christian ethic, and particularly in the Puritan ethic. In the marriage relation, for example, it lays all stress on mere physical fidelity—an obvious echo of the inferior man's inability to see anything save a physiological transaction in the meeting of the sexes—and so it connives at many varieties of psychical tort. The Puritan, if he practices what he preaches, does not annoy his wife with a mistress, but if the wife happens to be a woman of imagination, with a touch of poetry in her—that is, if she happens to be a superior woman—it must be plain that he inflicts upon her a great deal of suffering that is far worse than mere annoyance.

But the most salient of all the faults of the Puritan ethic is its failure to give any support to what may be called common decency. By this common decency I mean the habit, in one individual, of viewing with tolerance and charity the acts and ideas of other individuals—the habit which makes a man a reliable friend, a generous opponent and a good citizen. The Puritan, despite his strong opinion to the contrary, is seldom a good citizen. His eagerness to bring all his fellow-citizens to his own way of thinking, and to force it upon them when they resist, leads him inevitably into acts of unfairness, oppression and dishonor which, if all men were guilty of them, would quickly break down that

mutual trust and confidence upon which all civilization is based. Where the Puritan is so strong that resistance to him is hopeless, as in certain parts of the United States, he actually produces this disaster. To live in a community so cursed is almost impossible to any man who does not accept the Puritan ethic, which is to say, to any superior man. He is harassed in so many small ways, and with such depressing violence and lack of decency and honor, that he is usually compelled to clear out. This fact, in large part, explains the cultural collapse of New England and the marked cultural backwardness of whole regions in the South and Middle West. A man of superior kidney, living in a place of that sort, not only feels lonesome; he also feels unsafe. So he departs.

It is a pity that this irreconcilable antagonism between Puritanism and common decency exists, for without common decency life is bound to be disagreeable. The thing that makes us enjoy the society of our fellow men is not admiration for their inner virtues, their hard strivings to live according to the light that is in them, but simply a feeling of confidence that they will always act generously and understandingly in their treatment of us. Happiness is purely egoistical, and so is friendship. It is difficult to put any such confidence in a genuine Puritan. With the best intentions in the world he cannot rid himself of the notion that his duty to save us from our follies—*i. e.*, from the non-Puritanical acts that we delight in—is paramount to his duty to let us be happy in our own way. Thus he is unable to be tolerant, and with tolerance goes magnanimity. A Puritan cannot be magnanimous; he is unable to grasp the notion that it is better to yield a principle than to injure a fellow being. When the late Dr. Wilson, confronted by the case of poor old silly Debs, decided instantly that Debs must remain in jail, he acted as a true Puritan. The impulse to be magnanimous, to forgive and forget, to be ordinarily decent toward a misguided old man, was over-

come by the inner Puritan compulsion to observe the letter of the Puritan ethic at all costs.

Unluckily, this impulse to be magnanimous plays a large and necessary part in the everyday business of life. It is socially essential that men should be able to rely upon the good will of one another—that erring should be forgiven, and the forgiveness itself not churlishly remembered. But the Puritan will not have it so. His efforts to enforce Prohibition, for example, show how hard it is for him to accept this principle of common decency. In order to accomplish what undoubtedly seems to him to be a valuable good, he is willing to sacrifice all the good will and mutual confidence upon which human society is based—he is willing to play the spy, to take part in the execution of harsh laws, to goad and punish men innocent of conscious wrong-doing. He is rewarded for his hardness by that obscure inner approval which is his sole gauge of correct living. But he makes life uncomfortable for all men who disagree with him, and in the end, by awakening their resistance and hatred, he makes it more uncomfortable for himself. This is what ails American civilization today. Common decency has been adjourned, and life among us is no longer a splendid adventure, but only a feeble combat with small men, and full of distrusts, harassments and vexations.

§ 18

Specification.—The next girl I fall in love with must be a good piano-player—not a virtuoso, with all the monkey-shinery that goes therewith, but a good sight reader and able to do the *primo* of any ordinary duet without bursting a blood-vessel. The *primo* is too florid and pretentious for me; my modesty urges me to stick to the *secondo*. Moreover, the *primo* is usually beyond my technique; in the bass one may commit frauds upon the score without doing any great damage. There was a time when playing piano duets seemed to me to be unmanly and horrible; my professor, Herr Maass, had to call in the secular arm to induce me to do it. But as I grow older I begin to discern the charm that Tschaikovsky found in it, and not only Tschaikovsky, but also Schumann and Brahms. It is easier than dressing up and going to a concert. It is more sociable than playing two-handed—and, if one sticks to the *secondo*, a great deal easier. Who could imagine a more agreeable recreation for a rainy afternoon: the gal made amiable by the music, the soft-toned piano-lamp gilding her complexion, the maid Hortense coming in anon with a tray of large cocktails—not the usual little ones, but honest goblets? . . . A huge order: the gin, the piano and the girl. Nay, but New York is a big town!



OUT of little things came big ideas. Some man saw a can of sardines, and lo, the Subway!



The Wound

By G. Vere Tyler

SHE found him waiting for her in the restaurant agreed upon. He holding a table and she made her way to him through the throng of diners with the usual listless eagerness of detached city women about to have dinner with a man in a public place.

As she took her seat she noticed that he was sunburned, and although she began to chatter to him it fixed her attention as something far away, strange—an echo. She had almost forgotten that there were sunburned faces. For some reason it smote her, so that gradually her chatter subsided into a reverie. This gave him the chance to talk, affording her, as usual, the benefit of a somewhat stagey, yet highly melodious, voice. She found herself listening in an enrapt way, as to an old forgotten song. But of a sudden a pallor spread over her features, her eyes grew excited, almost wild, and then in a flash haggard. She put out one hand protestingly, as they half closed.

What he was saying had stabbed her daily life and she was feeling the flow of blood from the wound.

He was telling her that out where he lived fruit trees, pink peach and white plum, were in bloom, and that certain bushes had already put out tiny leaves of tender green, and that on that very morning he had distinguished the song notes of six different kinds of birds.

When his voice ceased a little sigh escaped her, and for a moment she thought she was standing in an old orchard of her childhood days listening to the songs of the six birds.

She was bathed in this ecstasy when the waiter arrived with imitation wine in a teapot. She aroused herself and smiled wanly, yet beamingly, into the eyes of the man opposite, as though the teapot containing the imitation wine was her physician arrived.

The next moment she began to pay for her dinner with her idle chatter heightened to nervous brilliance.



Optimism

By Paul Eldridge

I AM a tall black stump
Awaiting the coming of Spring.



The History of a Prodigy

By Lewis Mumford

I

I DREAMED about Tempe's baby long before it was born; indeed, long before anyone knew who the baby's father would be. It was manifest from the way that Tempe used to fondle cats, stroke little ornaments, and cuddle the urchins on the street who mistook her for a moving picture star whose name has long vanished from the screen—it seemed plain, I say, from these little indications that Tempe would some day espouse motherhood—joyfully.

This is not to imply that she was the sort of stolid, capacious-bosomed girl who one usually characterizes as "motherly." In those days—what a long time back a decade seems!—Tempe was the embodiment of lithe, mischievous, spirited girlhood, and as the cabarets were having a great vogue and the tango was vanishing reluctantly before the fox-trot, she gave herself over desperately to a round of parties, dances, teas, suppers, and automobile excursions with the miscellaneous riff-raff that dropped into our studio. In 1910 Tempe was one of three models I used to illustrate Haddon Richard's serial, "The Battered Moth," and she towered above the other two girls for the reason that Tempe was Tempe, and not merely a model.

To say that Tempe was Tempe is to say that she was a prodigy. I had been acquainted with her, in a casual, friendly way, since her childhood, and I never knew of anyone who combined so many disconcerting excellences. Her beauty, even at the age of ten, was something I prefer not to describe: there is an early portrait by Sir Whiteing

Wendy at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, in his habitual Gainsborough manner, and at the other extreme, much later in date, is my series of cover designs and illustrations, chiefly for the Megalopolitan Magazine, which portray her after she had budded into adolescence. In spite of Sir Whiteing's densely opulent background and my own infernal superficiality, there is no mistaking Tempe's unique loveliness; and a certain freshness you will find in my portrayal of the July Tennis Girl, the August Swimming Girl, and the September Canoeing Girl derives from the fact that she had a furious capability at all of these sports. Never could I scrutinize Tempe's physique without recalling some lines of Whitman about a splendid motherhood: one felt that, adequately mated, a new race of gods might issue from her womb. Her constitution was of granite, and many a morning she came into my studio to pose for the better part of a day with open eyes whose perfect violet clarity concealed the fact that she had slept for perhaps three hours the night before.

Why Tempe should have preferred to be a model instead of continuing as an actress I have never been quite able to fathom. Ever since the age of five she had been in the public gaze, and I suppose that had a great deal to do with it. Back in 1905 she was the leading child actress in Sir William Kirkie's "The Way to Wonderland." This was her last engagement prior to the wise retirement from the stage that punctuated her growing period. Some time when she was fifteen, she once told me, the late Mr. Charles Frohman had ad-

dressed a letter to her mother in which he offered to take Tempe back again under his wing and push her to the front of Broadway with all possible speed. In her fear of being forced back into a profession she had come to loathe, Tempe had become criminally desperate, and had opened and read and finally burned this portentous letter, and a subsequent note of inquiry, before her mother had a chance to get hold of either.

Tempe's mother, a softly aggressive woman, with a tendency to cackle, was hugely proud of her daughter's career, and when one visited their home, as one occasionally did (for, after all, Tempe was Tempe!), one noted that reminiscences, photographs, or clippings were strictly taboo in Tempe's presence. Tempe hated her past with an intensity that caused one no little curiosity, and she kept it buried with an assiduity one could not possibly mistake for sham. It was only the happy accident of her occasional absence that gave her mother the opportunity to impart to me any of Tempe's history.

Tempe's excellences were not merely physical. She composed verse that had a tinkling charm which Henry Cuyler Bunner might have envied, and her drawings—for she drew, too—showed a talent that was at least susceptible of cultivation. As a child her mind was swift, accurate, and forthright. Her mother had had a theory about withholding from her the smattering of A B C's that is imparted to children at a tender age, and lo and behold! she had actually learned to read and spell by deciphering, through tenacious question-*ing*, the big-lettered advertisements that she encountered in street cars and billboards.

That was Tempe all over in the days when I knew her best; an eager, restless, prying, insatiably adventurous creature, as intractable as a filly that has never felt the bit in her mouth—a perpetual challenge to all that was stodgy and settled and respectable. Before she was eighteen she had been engaged to be married at least four times,

to my knowledge, so keen was her desire to experiment; and each engagement was finally broken, so fearful was she, apparently, that her period of experiment might come to an end.

II

I MUST not make believe that Tempe retained through the decade that followed her turn into adolescence all the qualities for which I have given evidence, in their pristine state. The endless round of distractions into which she threw herself—a hectic life as she herself used to call it—had the inevitable effect of making her a little hard and perhaps more than a little superficial. Her cleverness became a sort of patter; she grew glib, and her mind became more and more circuitous; in short, she told lies. Her lies were usually attempts to reconcile the high premises upon which she conducted her friendships with the rough affronts she delivered them from day to day. With me she developed a very jolly comradeship indeed, and we used to tramp around the city occasionally, when the day's work was done, and talk about all sorts of abstruse matters for hour upon hour—there was a time when we read Plato together!—but more than once she threw over an engagement with me for the sake of (I am using her own pat words again) a more hectic evening.

Perhaps Mr. Owen Johnson had Tempe in mind when he wrote "The Salamander," a popular novel that was talked about during that sex craze we had a few years ago. At any rate, Tempe was a sort of salamander in the closing days of this period, and some of us wondered whether she would get married or—burnt. As a matter of fact, she passed through the whole round of experience physically unscathed, but for the fact that she developed scales. Alas! I grieve to confess that she developed spiritual scales.

There was an interval when her face became a little drawn and strained and white, and she rouged too heavily and

talked too volubly in order, as it were, to cover it up—and shortly after that her engagement was announced in the usual copper-plate and starched paper.

The event was a shock, for all our guesses had gone wrong. I had conceived that Tempe might, in a fit of compassion, run away with some poor devil of a serious artist to live for a while in an attic off Fourth Street, or that she might, as a relief from the basically penurious life she was leading, fasten herself in wedlock temporarily to some more or less vacuous millionaire. Tempe did neither; her fiancé was an earnest young business man who practised physical culture, read the *Saturday Evening Post*, and thought that womanhood ought to be protected.

When the marriage took place I was spending a preoccupied year in Nevada. I got back to discover that Tempe had accompanied her husband to Pittsburgh (of all places!) and had taken up residence in one of those hard and bright little suburbs on the Ohio River which shine like occasional diamonds in the long chain of cinders that stretches along the banks. At intervals I wrote her amiable, discursive letters, and the silence with which they were greeted only plagued me to repeat them. Then at last she wrote me a spear-headed little note in which she reminded me of her marriage and insisted that, while she still held me in the highest regard, she could not carry on a correspondence of which her husband, she was sure, would disapprove. The only thing about this note that reminded me of Tempe was the handwriting, and even that was a little changed.

I rationalized my chagrin by developing a series of corrosive witticisms on the general theme of marriage. And presently I forgot Tempe, except to wonder about her babies. The suburban life she had embraced was manifestly favourable to babies.

III

So nine years passed. I made calculations and allowances, and decided that Tempe must have at least four children.

Curiously, I heard nothing which permitted me to correct my figures until one day this spring Hilliard Brown, the automobile designer, stopped me in front of the Library and asked me whether I had heard that Tempe was in town.

"I met her by accident," he explained. "She asked after you and said perhaps you would like to see her."

I have nothing important to tell about our meeting. Tempe was not present, even in the flesh. In her stead was a tall woman of some thirty-two, with a blank face whose babyish outlines only heightened the effects of her age. There was an improvised crib in the sitting room of her mother's flat, and a little six-months-old child whose blue eyes were filled with serious amazement was uneasily sitting up in it. The baby charitably distracted my attention from Tempe—from the person who used to be Tempe—for the greater part of my visit, and I hope I managed to conceal the shock of disillusion with a show of idiotic geniality. Some lingering fragment of the old Tempe must have caught the shadow of disappointment in my eyes, however, for she made one or two essays at explanation.

"I have become quite calm and reserved," she said, "not wild, the way I used to be. James and I have a lovely house that overlooks the Ohio, not far from the golf links; I draw a great deal; and of course we have a car. James isn't artistic, you know, and the car is quite a bond between us. Now we have the baby. We really didn't need a baby; James is very steady and he likes his home. The baby is a dear, but somehow I cannot get enthusiastic about him."

"He's a very lively and intelligent little beggar," I hazarded.

"Yes," answered Tempe, "but I hope he won't get too intelligent. I don't want him to be an infant prodigy."

Tempe's mother, who has had many disappointments, and who was never reconciled to Tempe's mediocre marriage, said something caustic about the impossibility of rearing a prodigy from

such parents. "He really can't help being stupid," said Tempe's mother to me, with a smile in which raillery played second fiddle to truth. Tempe's eyes narrowed and her face became hard?

"Oh, I hope he *will* be stupid," Tempe exclaimed. "I want him to be—*quite stupid.*"

When I left I wondered whether it was the old Tempe or the new Tempe that had uttered this wish.



Exeunt Omnes

By Leslie Nelson Jennings

THESE dim, deserted, melancholy stages
That were so richly thronged at curtain-rise
Echo no longer to our mimic rages—

We are discovered through the old disguise! . . .
The play-books flutter: to their tattered pages

Return the ghosts that moved with tragic eyes
Through the heroic, unremembering ages
To muted music and romantic sighs.

The kings depart. These crowns that we surrender,
These faded purples, primacies and powers,
Were dreamed; and like a visionary splendor
Go down to doom with Denmark's mouldering towers;
And we forget if painted lips were tender—
Who loved us once among the paper flowers.



A HAPPY marriage need not be one in which the husband and wife are devoted to each other, but merely one in which they aren't devoted to some one else.



THE average man is the fellow whose idea is to get something for nothing. The genius is the man who gets it.



The Blissful Interlude

By Myron Brinig

I

ALPHEUS PARR looks far better in death than he ever did in life, and his widow is in Reno. Only it isn't necessary that she should be there, now. . .

I've just come away from Parr's home, where, in the living room, resting solemnly on two high-backed chairs, is his coffin. It's just an ordinary coffin, black and awesome and horribly comfortable; but lying in it with his toes turned toward heaven, Alpheus looks extraordinary. With the whitest of sheets wrapped about his cumbersome body, his hair carefully brushed to cover the bald spot and his eyes closed, Alpheus looks almost dignified. Curious, isn't it, that a man whose greatest ambition in life was to attain dignity, should accidentally stumble upon it in death? But Alpheus was ever a stumbler, a buffoon, so one more stumble matters very little. Peace to your bones, Alpheus Parr, and it is my respectful hope that in whatever place you have re-opened your eyes, there are souls more sympathetic and kindly than those on this planet which you have now so happily forsworn!

It was at Harvard that I first met Alpheus. I used to observe him waddling shyly from the chapel to the Romance languages. He attained the languages but never got within miles of Romance—although he deluded himself into thinking he had reached that Arcadia after his marriage to Cora. Just a delusion. . .

There was something about Parr that attracted a comfortable pity in my being. He was forever looking into

other men's eyes with that hang-down expression of his that seemed to say, "Oh, take me up, do! I'm not at all a bad fellow when you get to know me!" But Alpheus was never taken up; he was doomed from the cradle to be a gentleman-in-waiting—a dank, clumsy gentleman with moist, begging eyes.

In company with my room-mate, Ross Kemp, a leader in all sorts of college activities, I was walking across the campus one day when Alpheus hove, like a storm-tossed brig, into sight. From a distance of five yards, I could feel Parr's eyes upon us, begging some kind of acknowledgement. Passing abreast of us he gurgled something that sounded like "Hello," though it may have been any other word in the English language. It was all very awkward and pathetic—like an intoxicated man trying to sing a hymn. After he had passed us—I am certain that he did not look back—I turned to my room-mate and asked who the peculiar fellow was.

"Oh, don't you know?" answered Ross, as if the subject weren't of great importance. "That's Alpheus Parr. Funny looking fish, isn't it? They say he's a leetle bit loco upstairs. I don't know. Anyway, he's an unhealthy looking bounder."

Perhaps I did not realize it at the time, but Ross's references to Parr prejudiced me extremely in the awkward fellow's favor. "Leetle bit loco?" My interest was strangely, acutely aroused. "Unhealthy?" I resolved to investigate the funny looking fish.

The opportunity presented itself shortly after.

Parr was going to, or coming from

some class and his arms were loaded down with books and papers. Men of his type always have great difficulties with objects they are carrying, particularly when the objects are many and of uneven size. As usual, upon seeing me, Parr began to experience unusual emotions—for I was one of the popular ones of the University—and in his efforts to appear harmless and agreeable dropped several books to the ground. I stooped and returned them to him. For a few moments he wrestled with his burdens, physical and of the spirit; then he managed to gurgle, "Thank you."

"Not at all," I returned. "Going my way? Perhaps I can help you."

His soft cowed looking eyes had grown moist with an exceptional experience.

"Would it be any trouble for you—I mean—" he floundered.

He seemed all at sea. I acted promptly and relieved him of some of his books. Then, fitting my stride to his more ungainly one, I began an extraordinary acquaintance. For some minutes he had no words to express his gratitude. Then he turned towards me, quite overcome, and mumbled:

"I hate to put you to all this bother."

"You're not putting me to any bother," I snapped back at him, for now I was beginning to understand why the others shunned him.

We said not another word until we arrived outside his rooms—a surprisingly dignified looking house for so undignified a chap. By the steps we halted, and I was afraid lest he drop the books again in his confusion. At the time I thought him an awkward ass, but now I know that he was debating with himself whether or not I would consider it an insult if he asked me in. Imagine that! I solved his momentous problem for him by preceding him up the flight of steps. He must have followed me joyously.

His rooms, I thought, were exceptionally well and tastefully furnished. Evidently, Parr's family had money. I remember seating myself in a comfortable chair without invitation—how

superior undergraduates can be!—and calmly lighting a cigarette. Parr, having disposed somehow of his books and papers stood uncertainly in the center of the room looking at the ceiling. From top to bottom he was sloppy with the sloppiness of the soft and abnormally self-conscious. His features were sloppy, his hands were huge and damp looking, and his clothes had a dissipated, stale look.

"Nice place you have here," I began in a self-satisfied way.

"Ya, yep. It's not so much," acknowledged Parr still gazing at the ceiling.

I picked up a book lying on the table. Moore's "Memoires of My Dead Life."

"Moore," I remarked, not without a trace of surprise. "Smooth style that fellow has."

"Oh, so you've re—," began Parr. "Hasn't he? Lovely . . . Style . . . lovely. . . Have you seen my Keats?"

"No," I invited. "Where?"

It took Parr an unaccountably long time to bring his body into accord with his promises, but presently he was showing me a fine set of the poet's work. And he was talking intelligently about the poems! "Loco?" Certainly not. "Funny fish," maybe. But certainly not "loco." Only a buffoon. . .

It is extraordinary how articulate shy people can be at times. Inside the hour I was possessed of practically all his history. And I was beginning to piece Alpheus together. His father was a publisher of some note among the excessively high-browed, but his mother was dead. He hadn't cared about coming to Harvard particularly. He had felt that he would be out of place in the slenderhipped, athletic atmosphere of college . . . but to please his father. . .

"I'm so funny," said Alpheus getting his foot caught in the rug. "I wish I was different. No one seems to like me. . ."

I got up to go. His cumbersome, moist manners were beginning to wear on me. If he would only have exercised that seal-like body of his! If he would only have put on running trunks and

set those flabby legs of his in motion! "You'll come again?" he begged of me at the door.

"Yes, thanks," I accepted a trifle wearily and looked away from his worshipful eyes. . . . Outside the air was so crisp, and there was a haunting smell of woodsmoke.

II

I CONTINUED to see Parr on and off for the rest of my college career. After I left Harvard, I lost touch with him for two years, and when I thought of him at all it was rather like a soiled page in a neglected book. It was at a Fifth Avenue art gallery that we met again. It was there that Alpheus met Cora Lear for the first time. Cora is a sort of relative of mine—a third or fourth cousin I believe. Why on earth she happened to be viewing an exhibition of art, I can't for the life of me remember. At any rate, there she was at my elbow, pretending an interest in nudes in and out of the bath.

In order that there may be no misunderstanding, I must say at once, that Cora herself, in the nude, must be a stunning creature. She's the blazing sort of woman and it's easy to catch fire from her. A noted French artist has called her the most beautiful woman in America—mind you, not the world, and hence his statement carries some weight. Certainly, she whipped Parr's craving spirit cruelly. Optically, therefore, Cora was very much at home in Fifth Avenue art galleries. Spiritually, she should have been at her kennels.

One of the numerous newly sprung psychoanalysts once told Cora that she would never love any man as much as she loved her dogs. She had a dozen of them, I believe, ranging from one of those absurd toy poodles to a gigantic St. Bernard. She never walked out but there was a dog by her side, and she never fell asleep properly without that St. Bernard somewhere in the vicinity. I believe she would have slept with the dog but for the fact that he took up so much room. I believe she included

Giant in her prayers—Giant was the St. Bernard's name. He's dead now, and there's a great shaggy granite tombstone to mark the place where he lies. Alpheus will hardly have one as impressive.

But to get back to the art gallery. Cora and I stopped to look at one of the whitest of the nudes emerging from a nondescript bath-tub. What a figure! One of those cool, white nudes that seem a thousand worlds away from the way of all flesh. There was a spiritual beauty about the figure in the painting, a cruelty of far-away beauty. She had moved Alpheus Parr to tears. I heard someone sniffing at my elbow, and looking about vexatiously, I beheld a familiar profile, a profile that seemed to have oozed down from its proper proportions.

"Alpheus Parr," I mumbled.

He did not hear me—how could he so far away from me?

"Stop that idiot, will you?" Cora commanded me.

Naturally, she could not abide anyone, particularly a foolish looking man, moved to tears by a piece of canvas with paint on it. For a moment, I feared that Cora would treat Alpheus roughly, so I touched him on the shoulder. He looked at me uncomprehendingly.

"Well, well, Parr, fancy meeting you here!" I said warmly.

Then he remembered.

"You!" he gasped.

I reached for his hand and shook it. In my grasp it felt like a mess of warm dough. Hands ought to be educated.

I turned to Cora—Oh, she shouldn't have been there—and introduced her. She took to him at once and shook his hand in the same way she shakes a paw. "Parr? Parr? Where have I seen your name?"

Of course this was a little bit too much for Alpheus. A beautiful nude and then the most beautiful woman a French artist has seen in America! The wonder of it all was that he didn't go mad on the spot. "Where? Where?" she petted him. Oh, these dog women!

Words came to Alpheus at last.

"On a book, maybe," he managed to say.

"A book?" asked Cora. "Then you are an author?"

Alpheus looked pleased to the verge of pain.

"I'm a publisher," he acquainted her.

Cora should have quit there; she should have left him to his nude on canvas. These shy men become a trifle mad when they meet up with substantial ideals.

"Now I remember," said Cora. "I believe you are the publisher of that remarkable book, 'A Dog's World.' I'm sure you are."

When Alpheus admitted to this, Cora seemed to forget my existence. It was—well, preposterous. Never one had encouraged Alpheus to such a degree in such a short space of time. As for Alpheus, he must have been inwardly hysterical with the wonder of it all. Cora invited him to tea on the spot, and I had to help him into the car. Unaided, he would hardly have been able to manage it all. Cora evidently understood the man. How, under the sun, I had not the faintest idea. Now, I know.

His life was like a day that begins with a thickly depressing drizzle; in the late afternoon the sky opens his great blue eyes with a look of sublime bewilderment; and then the sun steps out from behind a cloud with a golden unexpectedness. Cora was as dazzling as she was unexpected. He lay back against the cushions of the limousine hardly daring to look at her for fear that a cloud would suddenly cover her and she would disappear again into the long dreary morning.

We came, at last, to her home, a large, rambling growth in the suburbs, and she led us out into the garden, rather crowded with lilac bushes and dogs. The dogs welcomed her vociferously and they sniffed at Alpheus kindly as if they had known him all their lives. He made several awkward attempts to pat them, and they jumped up and licked his face and hands. He had a way with them.

Presently, the favorite of the kennels,

Giant, was led out to us. He was no longer young and nimble. He came slowly and reluctantly, and his eyes ran—for joy of seeing his mistress, presumably. Cora introduced him to Alpheus very gravely; Giant held out a nonchalant paw and Alpheus shook it with something approaching enthusiasm.

"Nice doggie," he murmured vacuously. "Nice doggie."

"He's twelve years old," Cora informed us. "He keeps his figure remarkably. But I'm having trouble with his food. He hasn't the appetite that he had."

Alpheus murmured something unintelligible in response. What did it matter whether or not Giant had an appetite! Lucky dog to be so frequently in the presence of his mistress. Alpheus sipped his tea as if he were in the Garden of Eden rather than a garden of dogs. He probably saw himself alone with Cora in a far-away land. She was the center. There were no dogs—at least they weren't conspicuous; only himself and herself—with probably the whitest nude, the finest set of Keats and a Chopin Nocturne thrown in for good measure.

"I'm so attached to Giant. If he should die, I believe I'd go crazy," Cora was saying.

"But he will die some day," I informed my third or fourth cousin. I thought her slightly ridiculous.

Cora at once became amazingly unstrung. She upset her cup of tea on Parr's frock coat.

"I'm so sorry! Awfully clumsy of me!" she apologized.

"Oh . . . It's nothing," said Alpheus looking at her with his life in his eyes. He seemed greatly honored that the tea she had been drinking was on his frock coat. Something to take away with him.

"I'm so attached to Giant, you see," she explained. "I can't bear the thought of his being dead. The dog is part of my life."

"I understand," said Parr with a ridiculous reverence. Of course he did no such thing. The man was simply stretching himself in the sunlight—

warm, gorgeous sunlight. I doubt if he realized he was living the experience. He must have felt that the next moment someone would wake him, and he would look out, and it would be cloudy and blue and tragic.

I finally led him away. Before taking his leave, he promised to come again in a few days when the three of them, Cora, Giant and himself, would go out for a stroll together. On the way back to town, he spoke only once. I told him that I thought the winter we had just been through had been unusually mild. He said, "Beautiful," and closed his eyes. I was glad to leave him at his apartment. He waddled away without even saying good-night.

I beheld the unusual spectacle of Alpheus Parr in love.

III

"SHE treats me abominably," Ross Kemp complained to me several days later at the club. "Perhaps she doesn't love me, but she might respect me as much as she does her dogs."

"Are you really in love with Cora?" I asked my old room-mate. "If you are, I feel dreadfully sorry for you."

"I am in love with her," Ross emphasized. "And please keep your pity to yourself!"

I retreated behind my newspaper.

"She is amazing!" Ross recommenced. "This afternoon we had arranged to go to a *matinée* together. I bought the tickets—had a hard time getting them; the play's a success—and went out to get her. Well, I might have known! She wasn't in. The house-keeper told me that she was out strolling with that damn dog, and a man. After I had got the tickets, too. Don't you think—"

"A man?" I inquired from behind my newspaper.

"Yes. Mr. Parr or Carr or something."

"Ah," I said, putting aside my newspaper. "You mean Alpheus Parr."

"There, that's it," affirmed Kemp. "Who is he, anyway? Where did she meet him?"

"Why Ross, you must remember Parr? That fellow at Harvard who was so out of things? Parr, the publisher?"

"That—boor!" Ross flung a half-smoked cigarette at the ash-tray and missed. "Why should she go out walking with him? Why, I can't imagine . . . He's not bearable. But then, what do you expect of a woman who worships dogs?"

"That's just it, Ross," I told him. "Don't expect anything of Cora. She's the strangest girl in the world. Born that way. You just fall out of love with her, Ross, as quickly as you can. Go and take that engineering job in Central America, or wherever it is, and forget about her." And then I resumed my newspaper.

"You don't understand," observed Ross. Straight and handsome and clean as a man could be! Dear old Ross! That bridge of his that spans the Amazon. . . And not only that. A man who used to win debating matches and football games at Harvard. A man with a future; the best friend in the world. And here, she had gone out strolling with a twelve-year-old St. Bernard and a clown with baggy trousers! Well, well, . . .

"Perhaps I had better go down to Central America." Ross was bending over my chair and his voice sounded as if he wanted me to argue him out of it.

Instead, I said, "By all means, Ross! And by the time you've come back, she'll be ready to jump at you!"

V

THREE months later, Cora and Alpheus were married. The outcome of that strange courtship shocked me, but Alpheus must have been the most shocked of all. In a few miraculous months to be lifted out of the slough of morbid ineptitude to the heights of glorious romance is enough to make any man wake sensitively to the downright goodness of human existence. But life if not one, it is a series of awakenings, and tomorrow we may open our eyes to tragedy.

Those same qualities in Alpheus Parr that others found repugnant drew Cora irresistibly. Those gaping uncertainties of manner, the gawky shyness, the weakness of his features, the sloppiness of dress, in short, the whole impossibility of his excuse for counting himself acceptable in most eyes, made Cora fall in love with him. After that first stroll together Alpheus became her slave; never a man lived who worshipped a woman so absolutely. He lost no opportunity to make himself useful to her; there was something irrevocable about the way he answered her moods. And he wanted nothing in return but just the small favor of looking at her—looking, and treasuring every aspect of her beauty. What must have been his divine bewilderment when she suggested marriage! His gratitude must have wrung his very soul.

Not that she hadn't encouraged him. She used to take him out into the garden and feed him tea and cakes while she fed the dogs bones and chocolates. And when she was absent in town, it was Alpheus who watched jealously over the dogs until her return. To his especial care she gave Giant. The two, dog and man, became inseparable—although I am sure Alpheus would not have felt the least spark of interest in the dog had the mistress been other than she was. I often beheld the ludicrous spectacle of Giant and Alpheus walking along the road, putting up with each other because their mistress so willed it!

"Really," I remember saying to Cora one day after having met the two on the road, "I can't for the life of me understand what you see in the man. And Ross eating out his heart in Central America!"

Cora got quite angry with me that day, and her anger is the snappish kind. "You are insulting Alph—Mr. Parr I won't have it. Do you hear?"

I had never seen her in precisely that mood before, and I was amazed at the instantly summoned venom. Cora has always been a study to me; now I was bewildered by a new facet she showed

me. She was an infinitude of perversities—men fell in love with her and she fell in love with dogs.

Alpheus reappeared at that moment, and Cora became her usual self again.

"Did you have a nice walk, you two? I'm so glad you like each other! Come, let's go out into the garden, and I'll have something hot for the both of you."

Giant wagged his tail in an emotional manner and Alpheus grinned down at his shoes. Parr was certainly coming along in Cora's estimation, for she included very few mortals in the same breath with Giant. I saw them enter the garden, the woman moving briskly in front, the man and animal following with muffled exclamations of appreciation. I felt an almost uncontrollable desire to laugh until I was blue in the face. Instead, I scowled and left them abruptly.

Then one morning, Giant turned in his tail and died. It was awfully unusual and inconvenient. Cora achieved the epochal and cried. The dog lay stretched out, immensely still, amazingly cold, in Cora's bedroom. When he refused to stir, Cora called shrilly for her servants, and they came, but nothing could be done about it. Dead dogs are as dead as dead people. In a way, their lack of life is even more emphatic than the lack in humans, because one expects death from the higher animals, whereas in the lesser there is something radically different about it.

"He's dead! He's dead! What shall I do?" Cora demanded of her servants.

After a few minutes, the gardener suggested that she might bury him.

"What!" cried Cora. But the gardener was correct as things turned out. He had to be buried sooner or later, and the sooner the better. Cora began to realize this after an hour or so. She summoned Alpheus to the telephone and ordered him to be at the funeral the next day. No one else came to Cora's mind. No one else could. The dog had become inextricably linked up with the man.

Cora had the gardener procure a

casket with silver handles, and inside Giant was laid with his sapphire studded collar and his various wraps. The journey to the cemetery was solemn. The casket was placed on the floor of the limousine, and the two mourners sat in silence. Halfway out, Cora asked Alpheus to take her hand, and he obeyed. She looked up into his eyes sadly.

Upon that instant he ceased to think of the dead dog. But then, the dog had always been a background for him. It was always Cora in his eyes. Cora was the beginning and the end. Whatever she chose to do was as right as the sun and the rain and the stars.

On the way back from the cemetery Alpheus accompanied her to the monument works where she arranged for the shaggy granite stone that now marks the place of Giant's ashes. Then the two motored back to the house in the suburbs and secluded themselves. The house must have seemed curiously empty to her at first. But as the days passed the ache of Giant lessened. In his death was the triumph of Alpheus Parr. When the dog had lived he was secondary. Now that there was no Giant, he became the favorite slave of the household—to Cora he made up for that which had been taken from her. More and more of his time was taken up with that extraordinary woman. . . And they were married.

V

ROSS KEMP had departed for Central America a man of uncertain capabilities and wavering will. He returned, true steel. From an indefinite, undecided boy, he had developed into a genuinely strong power, a man of determination. Months of battling alone and overcoming the most stubborn difficulties had turned the trick. When he grasped my hand in the club, I felt the contact of a grim sureness gripping me. Of course I had always vaguely realized that Ross had the makings, but the surprise of his matured assurance was none the less disturbing. I felt securely carried away.

"Man of deeds, how are you? You've the zip and flash of a brand new locomotive!"

"Thanks," he answered. "Well, I've come back to marry Cora. Is she ready to jump at me?"

"You've come—really?"

"Good God, how I've longed for her!" he grumbled.

This was really very good! "Cora is already married," I told him. "Hadden't you heard?"

He let go of my hand very suddenly, and I felt like a swimmer must, who abruptly realizes a discouraging case of cramp. "Married? No. No, I hadn't heard that. Whom did she marry?"

"Alpheus Parr." The name caused me a certain degree of nausea. If I could only have laughed!

"Who is Alpheus Parr?"

Curious how Ross kept forgetting that man! "You remember Ross, surely? The publisher? That peculiar chap. . ."

"Oh. . . Well. . ."

"Well, Cora married him, Ross."

"What for?"

VI

It was funny to see Cora leading that husband of hers about town—that peculiar personality who had succeeded into the place left vacant by a St. Bernard. She showed him everywhere, not the least abashed, and though everyone grinned behind their backs, she continued to lead. It wouldn't have made the least difference to Cora if they had grinned directly at her. And Alpheus wore that expression of plaintive adoration in his eyes. It was obvious that he, himself, did not understand "what for." It was enough for him to realize the *actuality* of it. Someone had pushed him to the peak. He was there, sniffing the air of the heights, a trifle dazed, perhaps, but what of that?

Extraordinary personalities, Cora and Alpheus—there is hardly any explaining them. It's like trying to explain a beaver mothering a blind puppy—a rare occurrence, but not without the bounds

of probability since it has been known to happen. Now it is only necessary to lift the gate and enter in the ruthless, stabilizing force, Ross Kemp, and you have the divine comedy, complete.

I do not know exactly where Ross met Cora again, but wherever it was, the rekindled sparks of passion must have flown merrily. There can be no doubt in my mind now, that Ross returned from Central America at the propitious moment. Cora was beginning to tire of Alpheus. There had been moments when that husband of hers must have demanded something of herself—and Giant had never demanded anything of that especial kind. How Alpheus could have so far forgotten himself, is a mystery. But perhaps there was something in him that had gotten the upper hand, for the time being, something of the animal in every man that demands its purple nights. Alpheus had been caught napping on the heights, and his wife had shaken him rather roughly. Cora allowed her household pets unusual freedom, but when it came to licking off the table plates.

The novelty of Alpheus was beginning to wear off, but he, of course, did not understand the change. His eyes begged forgiveness from her every moment of the day, but Cora had become wary. He tried to make it up to her with jewels and flowers, and succeeded in irritating her the more. He ought to have known his place.

It was at a dinner dance given by Ross's mother to celebrate his return from Central America that the definite break between them came. Alpheus was the duck out of water at these affairs, and this particular event was no exception. The party found him at his incomparable worst. He seemed deplorably at variance with his evening clothes, his hands and his feet. These things had not irritated Cora before, but tonight, the conquering hero, Ross, happened to be sitting at her elbow. And Ross was in his particular glory. Beside him, Alpheus appeared a preposterous imitation, a caricature. Cora was obviously

ill at ease with her husband, and gave herself up to Ross's conversation. I noticed that Alpheus looked relieved to find that his wife was having an interesting evening—boredom had been becoming frequent with her. Public gatherings always filled him with terror, and at them, he spent most of his time pretending an interest in the furniture.

Alpheus never danced, and for a long time Cora had abstained because she had lost interest. But at Mrs. Kemp's affair she re-entered into the exercise with Ross as partner. I observed them moving gracefully across the floor, and it seemed quite natural for them to be so close together. It must have been then that Cora succumbed to the greater realities. Probably the strength of Kemp's arms awakened Cora's somnolent desires after so many years. In such a splendid creature as Cora, sex is bound to come out sooner or later, and unfortunately for Alpheus, it came later.

Toward the close of the evening, they disappeared from the floor, and did not re-appear again until "Home Sweet Home." Alpheus, meanwhile, had been making some half-hearted attempts to find his wife, and had looked everywhere but in the green-house. If he had entered there, he would have been considerably shocked. As it happened, I had been the one to come upon Cora and Ross kissing away all of the obstacles in the world. Well, Cora had fallen in love three years too late. Out in the hall I collided with Alpheus, and it came over me all of a heap that he was Cora's husband. It took me a few minutes to pull myself together again.

"Did you find her?" Alpheus asked sleepily.

"No—yes, she'll be here directly." I hoped to God they would.

Presently, Cora and Ross made their belated appearance, and we were all bundled into that historic limousine of hers. She looked younger than she had in months and Ross seemed strangely at ease. I remembered his, "I've come back to marry her" and stole a glance at Alpheus. He sat alone in one corner, raising his eyes now and again to

the splendid vision of his wife. She had never looked more beautiful.

When we reached the house in the suburbs, Alpheus got out of the car first and stood beside the door offering his hand to Cora. She made as if to descend, then seeing Alpheus for the first time in several hours, drew back involuntarily and motioned Ross with her eyes to get out first. And it was he who assisted her out and let his firm brown hand linger with a tender authority upon her arm. I saw Alpheus following them obsequiously up the steps, across the threshold. . .

VII

FROM what Cora has since written me—her letters are distressingly frank—and from what I know of Parr's character, I have been able to reconstruct, bit by bit, that last dreadful evening. For five months Cora had been flaunting her new discovery of love in everybody's face. Only Alpheus misunderstood. The woman had mesmerized him when she married him, so it is easy to understand his blindness. He was frankly glad that Ross had returned to "entertain my wife—I'm afraid I'm such a bore." It is small wonder then that his awakening should be so piercingly tragic.

After dinner, Cora came down, dressed for traveling, and informed her husband very coolly that she was leaving him forever. They were in the dining-room, and Alpheus dropped a log into the fireplace with such vehemence that the sparks flew up and bit his cheeks.

"What did you say, dear?" he asked, still looking into the fire. There is something about a fire that robs the very moment of its cruel contours.

"I'm going to Reno tonight, Alpheus. I've bought my ticket. I'm not coming back. I'm going to marry Ross Kemp."

Alpheus turned about slowly so that he faced his wife. He dreaded to look into her eyes, but when he did he knew it was all over, ended—this unutterably blissful interlude.

"Cora . . ."

"I never loved you, Alpheus. You must know why I married you."

He opened his mouth but said nothing. There was a collision of far-off planets sounding in his ears.

"I love Ross, Alpheus," she said with terrific candour. "If he wanted to kill me, I'd let him."

"You—you don't love me, Cora!"

"No. Look out! The flames will burn your coat."

The pitiful expression in his eyes!

"Then why did you marry me, Cora?"

"You ask and ask! Can't you keep quiet? You're such a noisy old fellow. Your eyes—they're just like Giant's. After he died, I had to have someone around me to remind me of the dog." She went up to him and began patting him on the head. "You have the kindest eyes in the world, Alpheus—so sweet and pleading—like dear old Giant's. Now run off to bed, dear fellow, and be thankful you're rid of me."

Then the maid brought down her bag, and she left the house. Alpheus was alone. Far off, a dog howled, howled, howled. . .

"Cora!" he screamed. "Cora! Cora!"

The maid reappeared in the door with a very frightened face. "She's gone, and she said for you to go to bed, sir. Will you, sir?"

He said nothing. He merely stood in the center of the room, swaying slightly. The maid disappeared.

He merely stood. It must have been an hour later that he went to the library table and removed something from one of the drawers. Then, without hat or overcoat, he went out of the house. He walked and walked. There was a bench. He sat down mechanically. It was a bright evening. The moon shone.

A mongrel cur came up to him and sniffed his heels. The moon shone into the dog's eyes—sweet and pleading. Alpheus remembered swiftly as a falling comet. The cur looked up at him as if begging a caress.

"Oh!" sobbed Alpheus. He removed the gun quickly and fired into the dog's eyes. Then he pressed the muzzle to

his temple. There must have been an instant of remembering the most amazing happiness . . . Keats and Chopin and her . . . then nothing at all.

* * *

With the whitest of sheets wrapped about his cumbersome body, his hair

carefully brushed to cover the bald spot, and his eyes closed, Alpheus looks almost dignified. Curious, isn't it, that a man whose greatest ambition in life was to attain dignity should accidentally stumble upon it in death?



Profile

By W. Adolphe Roberts

FLAME-COLORED hair upon this banded head
Is heavy like a crown.
The forehead, carved in marble, shows a thread
That runs most straightly down.

To where curved lashes touch the cheek and shroud
One opal eye, then dips
To arrogant, fine nostrils and the proud,
Implacably proud, lips.

Be gentle with the lilting words that tell
You only half your grace.
I should know how to frame a villanelle
Were you to turn your face.



*L*IFE is like chewing gum and youth is the flavour that only lasts a little while.



*G*IRLS make a man think of marriage. Women make him regret it.



American Luck

By Catharine Brody

I

THE industry of the wealthy cloak and suit manufacturer, Isaac Goldveller, his persistence and his diet while traveling fortuneward, have often been described for the emulation of like voyagers and the delectation of the unworthy. He is held up in the night schools as a model of the poor boy who has succeeded. The public knows his rise from a sweatshop worker to the owner of an establishment that occupies half of a building on Fifth Avenue. It has heard the tales of his early struggles. But what the public does not know is that Goldveller has no theory of effort. He believes ardently in luck, and he considers, deep in his consciousness, that his fortune is based merely on a stroke of luck at a precarious point in his career. Goldveller sailed for America because the western continent seemed to him so much more fortunate than the eastern. He came here in 1900 from a village in Lithuania, a tiny settlement of fifty Jewish families who kept shop and plied trades for the surrounding peasants. He was of peddler stock. All year round he traveled with his father through remote Russian villages, eating bread and water and begging for permission to sleep on the stones of filthy Russian inns where it was every drunken moujik's privilege to spit at a Jew.

The Goldvellers were accustomed to this as an inalienable part of their routine.

"They were just what their name implies then and now," old acquaintances say, shrugging their shoulders. "Goldvellers—hankerers after gold."

The son of the peddler finally escaped across the border and so to America. He left his wife and child with her parents until he could make his fortune.

He came to live with friends, who received him out of charity because he was abashed and helpless in the face of the swarming city. Beside Goldveller, there were the usual quota of boarders, including four men and a young girl relative, all new to the country.

Goldveller then stood six feet in his stockings, an unusual height for a Jewish man. His hair lay flat and heavy and black on a squat head above a narrow forehead. His nose spread blunt and wide, and the rest of his profile was jaw. The muscles of his face were like taut ropes under a dry, pale skin. He had a heavy neck, too short for the prognathous skull which it supported. His voice was hoarse, and his teeth badly spaced, so that he seemed to speak voraciously, swallowing half of his syllables while the saliva oozed between the gaps.

He was too clumsy and untrained for any of the finesses of the cloak and suit trade—pressing or cutting—so he became an operator in a shop on Pell Street, where the smells of a stifling room mingled with the penetrating odors of four tenement house tiers of kitchens.

He rose before dawn and wet his face and hands with cold water, with a perfunctory slap of soap. He ate his breakfast in the shop out of the basket of an old peddler who supplied the workmen. He came home late in the evening and sat down at an oil-cloth table on a long board, supported by a chair at either end, which accommodated all the

boarders. On some nights, after supper, a young medical student who gained a haphazard living by teaching ambitious immigrants how to read and write English arrived to give a lesson to someone in the house.

"C-a-t, cat; t-h-a-t, dat," read the workworn pupil with pathetic perseverance, while the others talked loudly in the same room.

When the teacher left, they would sit on the plank about the half-wiped table and argue, their raucous voices tearing through the haze of pipe and cigarette smoke like foghorns through a fog. Generally they argued about making a fortune. Some held that the way to do this was to become Americanized—so they took "lessons."

"You go ahead and spend your money to become American," Goldveller would say, "me, I will save mine. Money and luck; that is all one needs in America."

He was a great believer in luck. He watched for it. He peered in the faces of the passersby for it. He would let no chance pass, he put his hand to everything, for he reasoned that some luck might be hidden there. Yet he was not superstitious. He did not think luck could be courted. It struck haphazard like lightning. It happened or it didn't.

"The blindness of justice," he was fond of quoting from an old Hebrew proverb, "is the blindness of a person who has once seen. But luck is sightless from birth."

He was considered to be a hardworking man, but not brilliant, and he got along as well as could be expected.

II

AFTER a few years he sent for his wife and child. He rented three rooms on Ludlow Street, so choked that the very walls sweated in summer. In the kitchen he placed an old wooden table and three wooden chairs, together with a few gray pots and thick dishes. He bought a sideboard of varnished board and a small square table painted black and two shiny, high-backed chairs, the

headboards of which were decorated with hugh scrolls. He also got his wife a large wooden clock and two china vases, garnished with painted pink carnations, as well as a calendar with a picture of a woman in dead white skin and leg-o-mutton sleeves.

When he brought his wife home she was not delighted at the furnishings. She whimpered and complained. She especially hated the tepid drinking water of the East Side and longed for the well water, pure and cold as falling snow, of their Russian town.

"Is this your American luck?" she complained bitterly.

III

THEN Goldveller entered into a facile partnership with several other workers in his shop, the sturdiest and most raw-boned of the lot. They became contractors, that is, when the cloak and suit manufacturers were on the point of tearing out chunks of their black hair over the antics of the union, Goldveller and his associates stepped in to obtain huge bundles of newly cut materials which they carried to their store on Madison Street. There, each of the innumerable associates whirled at a machine all day and quarrelled over his share of the receipts part of the night. The sewn garments were carried back secretly to the issuing shop.

The Goldvellers' three cubicles were further divided to house six boarders, for whom Mrs. Goldveller cooked interminably, so as to be able to pay living expenses. She was always bending over her stove or her kitchen sink, frying, boiling, stewing, or scrubbing. Her skin grew hard and yellow, her voice thin, her temper sharp-pointed, so that when she spoke it was like pricking tender flesh with needles.

Sarah, the child, who was then four years old, found it the better part of wisdom to guard inconspicuous corners or play on the street.

When Goldveller rose before dawn, his wife was already clattering her dishes in the kitchen. He ate hurriedly

with the other boarders, nondescript messes of food left over from the supper of the night before. Returning late, he devoured his supper with huge gustatory smacks and snored in a rocking-chair till the beds were distributed for the night.

He had no interests and no map of endeavor. He worked hard instinctively because his body seemed to crave hard work, just as he saved money instinctively because his soul seemed to yearn for that. He planned nothing but he had a certain native acumen which enabled him to squeeze the last drop of personal profit out of every combination of circumstances. He found luck in unexpected places, for he was searching for it and he was always a great believer in it.

IV

LUCK, while not deigning to give the Goldvellers any intimate signs of acquaintance, often quirked her lips at them in passing. She appeared to be noting them as a member of the old guard notes a social climber, negligently but on the alert for a *faux pas*.

By this time Goldveller had progressed to a shop on East Broadway, where he and a partner pooled most of their savings. This partner, whose name was Levy, was round and fat and soft and smooth. He had a chubby, smiling face and even, white teeth. Goldveller had chosen him because, in addition to owning the larger share of capital, he could read, write and speak English very well.

Levy proved to possess other capabilities. Slight dishonesties in the accounts, and in the purchase of materials, and the disappearance of cash in small amounts threatened to disrupt the business. Goldveller had contributed not more than two thousand dollars, while the partner owned twice as large a share. All the money Goldveller could gather together from the remainder of his savings and through loans would not suffice to buy out Levy.

Ignorance and fear shattered any
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weapons which Goldveller might have used against his partner. He would sooner have faced jungle lions than have consulted with lawyers.

He aged and grew garrulous under the strain. Each night he recited to his wife and his boarders the tale of his wrongs.

"What can you do when the luck is bad?" he would ask almost apologetically, spreading out his enormous hands.

He toiled just as grindingly, he sweated just as profusely over his daily bread, but he had no profit of his labor. He saw that the shop would soon fail and carry with it all his earnings unless he could oust Levy, and there was no way of ousting Levy.

He discussed it with his wife, but she was bitter and impatient.

"American luck! There's your American luck for you that you're always talking about," she would say.

V

THE Goldvellers' daughter, Sarah, was ten years old. An only child, she got little attention from her father, who showed his disappointment at lack of a son by ignoring her, or from her mother, too overworked to be tender.

She was not a pretty child, forward and furtive by turns, after the manner of the slums, uncared for, dressed nondescriptly. She went to school now and then. She abused the boarders and they cursed her. She stood on the corners and made faces at passing boys and they watched their opportunity and tweaked her hair so viciously that she shrieked with pain. She fought on the street with her best girl friends and when they scratched her face, she learned never to come to her mother for consolation.

Mrs. Goldveller did not coddle her certainly but neither did she ill-treat her. She turned her out of doors in the morning, dropped food down to her from the windows at intervals, and did not expect to see her before nightfall, when the child usually ran up the stairs

before her father, screaming for a penny.

This penny Goldveller handed to her automatically because he was always thinking of his own affairs and her clamoring disturbed him.

VI

ONE night when the failure of the shop seemed more than ever imminent, Goldveller did not even notice the absence of her shriek of greeting at the corner of the street.

A limousine and ambulance stood in close conjunction in front of his tenement. He shoved his way through a crowd of women, with their nodding heads and their wringing hands close together in the doorway.

"Ah, there's Mr. Goldveller, now," they cried with various intonations and pushed him forward.

"What's the matter?" he demanded.

"Ah, go upstairs now, hurry up, Mr. Goldveller," they urged him, all their different accents blending in one note of tragedy like the crescendo of a Greek chorus.

He went.

The dark halls were full of whispering shadows that commiserated with him at every turn. The door to his room gaped open, and kitchen, bedroom and dining room were brightly lit and choked with grimy humanity.

They cleared a way for Goldveller to the farthest room where Sarah lay on the bed, unconscious. A white sheet covered her limbs. A zealous young ambulance surgeon and a very large and kindly policeman alternately bullied Mrs. Goldveller, who sat on the edge of the bed, wringing her hands, sobbing, grumbling, and attempting to evict the condoling visitors, who like the tide rolled in noisily after every outward movement.

Mrs. Goldveller screamed at sight of her husband. The doctor took Goldveller by the shoulder.

"Now see here," he shouted, shaking him slightly, in an effort to make him understand, "your kid ran under an au-

tomobile. Her left leg's got to be amputated, and I've been telling your wife she must be taken to the hospital. Now you go over there like a good fellow and get your wife away, while we take her, see?"

The room swam in front of Goldveller, as he thought of the expenses—so many expenses—incidental to the accident. The tears stood in his eyes.

"Such luck, such luck!" he mumbled.

Suddenly Goldveller raised his eyes and saw what had been attracting more of the attention than the spectacle of Sarah. It was a young woman in a long motor coat and many veils whose name had been smeared all over the front pages as the recent heiress to a huge fortune and withal an earnest worker among the poor.

She was tightly drawn together in her corner and looked as if she would shriek at the slightest contact with any of these people.

Her liveried chauffeur straddled in front of her, his expression divided between fear and aggressiveness. He beckoned to Goldveller, and as he stumbled over, the young woman in the corner whimpered.

"Oh, I'm so sorry. Oh, I wouldn't have had it happen for the world."

"She ran under the car, ma'am," said the chauffeur haughtily, and added in an aside to Goldveller, "Don't you listen to no quack lawyers. There's a dozen witnesses and the cop that seen her run under my car, see?"

"Oh," cried the girl again, "this is too terrible! This mustn't get into the papers," she appealed to the policeman, who looked discreet and dubious. "And oh, I'm so sorry, Mr.—Mr.—Gold. I—I—do so want to do something for the little girl—if she has her leg amputated. Something for her future, you know," she said with some idea of tactfully circumventing the pride of the poor.

Goldveller hung on her words, the outline of whose meaning he was just gathering. Some instinct warned him to be pathetic and silent. The young woman raised her veil, disclosing large eyes, overflowing with sympathy and

tears. And, with the air of a child who offers a toy for solace, she took out her cheque book.

VII

WHEN Sarah had been carried out still white and unconscious on a stretcher, when the condoling visitors had departed, Mrs. Goldveller from sheer inadequacy to the strain of emotion, moaned on her bed and piled ingenious curses on evil luck.

"Your America and your American luck!" she wailed over and over. "It would have been better had we never

seen America. This could not have happened in Russia."

"And could this have happened in Russia?" cried Goldveller.

He took his hands from his pocket, where he had kept them the latter part of the evening, and showed her the young woman's contribution toward Sarah's future. It was a cheque for ten thousand dollars.

"Now," he said, and his eyes shone with exultation, "I shall be able to buy out Levy."

After he had passed this crucial point in his career, there was never any doubt about Goldveller. His rise was steady.



Novelty

By John C. Drake

WHEN he came home late that evening, she did not act the way her women neighbors acted on such an occasion. She did not peremptorily pack up her things and announce with forced calmness that she was going home to mother. She did not pace the floor in a rage and tear her hair crying out against the faithlessness of men. She did not bend over their infant son and tearfully croon that she hoped he wouldn't grow up to be a man like his father. She did not surround his head with a halo of broken crockery. Her method was decidedly different. She walked up to him very calmly and very deliberately and punched him in the nose.



The Wind from the Steppes

By Ethel Talbot Scheffauer

THE winds of the world go sweeping
Wide-winged from Pole to Pole;
The winds of the world go creeping
In and out of my soul.

In the hearts of the peoples
The bitter East wind blows,
From the very bells in the steeples
Revolt like a tocsin flows.

The wind from the fields of battle
Blows through the dusk to us,
It stirred Death's drum and rattle.
And rings the Angelus.

It gave the breath to a mother
Cursing for her dead son,
And hastens over another
Rejoicing that wars are won.

The winds of the world are blowing
Wide-winged from Pole to Pole,
But the East wind, only the East wind,
Blows in the people's soul.



POETRY is a matter of meter. So, for that matter, is the other kind of gas.



MEN have a taste for poetry. Women, for poets.



Yesterday's Leaves

By Oscar Lewis

I

PRESCOTT was "Young" Prescott in 1911, and more of a human being than he is today, and perhaps, but not necessarily, more of a poet. He was, at any rate, a young man to be taken seriously, the possessor of an undeniable talent, though which way he was likely to spring would have been difficult to prophesy, for he was only twenty-three, and in 1911 literary adolescence still was kept very severely on the outer fringe.

He came down from Barwick just after commencement, it may even have been on the following day, and joined the staff of the *New Beacon*. At Barwick young Prescott had done what young men of talent invariably do at Barwick; he had edited the literary monthly, and he had sold a poem, a somewhat didactic sonnet that resembled, say, one of Shelley's second best, to the *Century*. He was, in 1911, a slightly built young man with enthusiasm, black eyes and a capacity for work. He went to the *New Beacon* while that weekly still was almost unknown; a year and a half before it reached its crest; five years before the war forced it to suspend.

Everyone on the *New Beacon* in those days, from Sanderson Polk down, kept shockingly long office hours, and young Prescott, a lad of enthusiasms, worked not less certainly than fourteen hours a day. Polk, himself a notorious night-hawk, has told of returning to the *Beacon* rooms at two, even at four, in the morning and chasing young Prescott protesting off to bed. His work then, of course, was chiefly the most

tiresome sort of routine. He toiled over proofs, spent each Friday at the printer's, even on occasion helped with the books in the business office.

Young Prescott slaved in this outlandish fashion simply because he liked it. Everyone on the editorial board, it is true, was expected to overwork, and did. But no one, certainly, equalled young Prescott's almost fanatical industry. Indeed, after the first few months Polk tried earnestly to induce him to take things easy, for by that time it had become evident that if those particular volumes of the *Beacon* (IV, V, and part of VI) were to be remembered, it would be because of Gail Prescott's poetry. For more than a year each number contained something of his; a single sonnet, a sequence, two long narrative poems—the only ones he ever wrote—or perhaps merely some lyrical fragment.

Persons of discernment began to comment upon this distinctive new voice in the *Beacon*, and in the spring of 1913 two volumes of his poems appeared almost simultaneously. Young Prescott arrived with a bang that suggests our present-day happy acceptance of youth. Before he realized it, he had become one of the lesser literary lions of the season, and because he still was only twenty-four, he took his new social obligations quite as seriously as he took his work.

It doesn't matter in the least in whose drawing-room he first met the Devereaux girl. What does matter very much is that young Prescott fell immediately and most hopelessly in love with her. The fact that she was Colonel Devereaux's daughter, and the grand-

niece of Peter Devereaux, seems not to have occurred to him, and to the girl's credit it must be said that she gave her very high social position no more consideration than did young Prescott himself.

To their own eyes their romance must have seemed a very pretty one. Muriel Devereaux was scarcely twenty, a tall girl with the sort of reserved beauty one sees in the portraits of slim English girls in *Tatler* and *Sketch*. Young Prescott wrote two excellent sonnets to her eyes. Prescott himself in those days was attractive in the completely disarming fashion that one so frequently sees when youth and success are combined in the same person. And it must not be forgotten that he had become something of a fad that winter. The Devereaux girl saw him accepted on terms of equality, even with some deference, by her own set, and no question as to his eligibility seemed to have entered her head. It is probable, indeed that she felt some sense of triumph in carrying off the most attractive young celebrity of the season. The romance, at any rate, continued for several months without, apparently, the slightest opposition from any source.

Young Prescott accomplished during this period much of what is undoubtedly his best work. As the *New Beacon* grew in influence and popularity, he became an assistant editor and was relieved of much of the routine drudgery. But this does not entirely account for the increase in the volume and quality of his poetry. The real explanation seems to be that young Prescott needed some direct and strong inspiration to stir him to his best effort. The *New Beacon*, during the months it had been his obsession, had supplied that need, and Muriel Devereaux, coming before his interests in the weekly had begun to wane, had spurred him even to better work. Later, when both these influences were removed—but it is not yet time to deal with that.

It is not known, and certainly does not greatly matter, if young Prescott, as it was rumored, actually asked

Colonel Devereaux for his daughter's hand, or whether the true state of affairs was discovered by the girl's parents in some less direct way. In either case, the Devereaux were not long in acting. Young Prescott as a mildly amusing literary curiosity, a weaver of pretty word patters, was welcomed; as a prospective Devereaux son-in-law he was upon very different ground. It happened, for one thing, that a son-in-law already had been selected, an eminently solid and eligible young man belonging to a family more exalted even than the Devereaux.

What influence was brought to bear upon the girl is immaterial; probably no more, or less, than that of family obligation. The important and expected thing is that she yielded.

There was a final meeting which must in its way have been very romantic and beautiful. The two promised, for one thing, that since their love must be one of relinquishment, it would be a doubly consecrated love, one that would last through eternity. A foolish and rather pathetic vow, but one not infrequently exchanged by the young, and poor Prescott was most desperately in earnest.

He gave her that evening a final present, a copy of Shelley's poems, a small edition with leaves uncut; bound, in the transient fashion of the day, in leaves of limp gray leather. He wrote her name upon the flyleaf, and the date.

It was to be the visible sign of their pact, the symbol of an eternal devotion.

II

PRESCOTT's case, after all, is not in the slightest degree unusual. The ascending young artist who blows up in mid-flight, as it were, and from whom nothing real is heard again, is too familiar a spectacle to cause anything beyond the most perfunctory speculation. Young fellows of singular talent drop out of the arts by the score; disappear, drift into stocks and bonds, or simply sit still and ossify. Another example, perhaps, of Nature's prodigious waste. No better illustration of this point could

be chosen than that which is presented by the staff of the *New Beacon*. Certainly it would have been difficult to find a more brilliant and promising group of youngsters than the five members of its editorial board during the time when that weekly was causing many to regard with hope the intellectual future of America.

Well, the *New Beacon* suspended scarcely half a dozen years ago, and what has since been heard of its editors? Sanderson Polk, of course, still is very much with us, the newspapers less than a month ago carried news of his appointment as minister to Portugal—or was it to Holland? But what of the others? Horace Jeffery, whose treatment of politics frequently delighted and always disturbed us, has disappeared; he has simply vanished, nothing whatever has been heard of him. Roy Willson Gans, the piquant R. W. G. of the *Beacon's* music and dramatics page, married well and has been living in Mentone and doing, so far as anyone knows, nothing whatever. Hight Barnes, a satirist and critic of really high order, conducted for two years a dismal humorous column that was syndicated in backwoods, semi-weekly newspapers. He died of influenza, in 1918, in a Georgia training camp.

Here were three singularly gifted youngsters who have dropped out completely. There remains Gail Prescott, and it is his story which we shall follow in more detail.

It seems preposterous to advance the theory that a first class creative artist can be ruined by an unhappy love affair. Yet it cannot be denied that nine-tenths of everything young Prescott wrote after the episode of the Devereaux girl was surprisingly bad. Months before the final suspension of the *New Beacon* it had become obvious that the work appearing under Prescott's name was in every way unworthy of him and damaging to his reputation. Prescott himself, whose critical judgment was both keen and unbiased, seems to have realized this fully, and he adopted finally

what was perhaps the only course open to him; he ceased almost completely to write. The final volume of the *New Beacon* will show not more than a dozen poems of his, all mechanically perfect but thoroughly valueless, and perhaps half as many somewhat dull reviews of the work of his contemporaries.

With the publication of the final number of the weekly the staff, of course, scattered, and Prescott returned almost at once to the upstate village where his parents lived. It is said that for nearly two years he worked as a hired hand upon various farms in that vicinity, perhaps in some futile effort to regain there the perspective he had so completely lost during his last year in the city; perhaps merely because he did not care. At any rate, he drifted back again presently and one hears of him next as reading manuscript for one of the minor publishing houses and contributing bad verse to the magazines.

It has been suggested as a possible explanation of young Prescott's case that he was capable of real accomplishment only when under the spur of some strong and close outside influence. The marriage of the Devereaux girl, which took place while the career of the *New Beacon* was struggling toward its close, removed what was perhaps the last compelling influence he was to experience; at any rate for a number of years.

It must not, however, be supposed that young Prescott personally had become a morose and unsocial person; the change in him was far less obvious and more fundamental than that. Beyond a certain too evident cynicism that now was never absent from such serious work as he attempted, there was no sign of the embittered or disappointed man about him. Perhaps as accurate a way as any to describe his attitude is to say that he did not care.

To use a very old simile, he was like a ship that had lost its rudder. There can be no doubt that he lived largely in the past. The episode of the Devereaux girl must have stirred him far more

deeply than the average man ever is stirred by a love affair. One wonders what the ultimate effect would have been had he married Muriel Devereaux; or, for that matter, had he lost her entirely. To one of young Prescott's temperament, the situation into which he had blundered was the worst, the most stultifying imaginable. He had given the girl up irretrievably, yet he was not in any real sense free of her. There remained always that preposterous agreement by which each had pledged some sort of permanent and ethereal loyalty to the other. There was the book he had given her, the symbol of that loyalty. Anyone who understands Prescott even partially must know with what scrupulous degree of honesty he carried out his portion of the pact.

No one, save perhaps a student of the pathology of human emotion, could find an interest in any complete account of Gail Prescott's life during the period, say, from the suspension of the *New Beacon* to the beginning of his intimacy, some time last winter, with Anita Curran.

Prescott at this time was thirty-three or four, no longer spoken of as "young" Prescott; for that matter no longer spoken of at all. Critics and public alike had forgotten that a decade before he had been regarded, and in his case justly, as one of the most individual and promising of American poets.

Anita Curran herself was a woman of most vivid personality. She was, along with other things of more consequence, a short story writer of prestige and talent; a product of San Francisco's Tar Flat district—the one thing of which she was in any degree proud—and of eleven metropolitan newspapers scattered throughout the breadth of the country. An arresting personage of the most unusual magnetism and charm, she was, in her mid-thirties, very near the top of her profession. It is not surprising that she presently met Prescott, for at that time she positively met everyone, and there, after all, is nothing remarkable in the fact that she recognized and responded to the attraction

of his innate integrity, and set about to revive the long submerged power of creative self-expression which she felt certain still existed in him.

The intimacy of the two dated almost from the moment of their first acquaintance, and perhaps because Anita Curran sensed failure from the beginning, she brought all the varied forces of her logic, her charm, and her limitless common sense to bear upon poor Prescott. There can be no doubt that he came presently to return the love which she characteristically scorned to conceal; that he saw in her his sole salvation, realized that their marriage offered the final opportunity to regain the lost perspective, the golden expression, which he desired with an intensity which he had only at that time come fully to realize.

But Prescott's preposterous loyalty to the girl he had loved eight years before was too strong, too completely ingrained in his nature, to allow any change now. On the day he made his final, perverse decision, Anita Curran left for Europe upon one of her protracted journalistic jaunts. They parted excellent friends, but it was understood that they were to see no more of each other.

After leaving the dock from which her boat had sailed, Prescott, less confident, less sure of himself than ever before, wandered aimlessly for hours about the city. Some vagary of his subconscious mind, or perhaps mere physical weariness, caused him at length to pause before the narrow shop of an obscure dealer in second-hand literature. In a box of old magazines a copy of the *New Beacon* caught his eye, and with some glimmer of sentimental reminiscence he carried it inside and bought it.

The interior of the shop was attractively quiet and cool. Prescott wandered for a time among its musty aisles and alcoves. Then he stopped and with a sudden start of recognition pulled from a shelf of ornate "gift books" a copy of Shelley, bound in limp gray leather. He held the volume tightly,

tingling with anticipation. Some obscure instinct told him at once that this was the book; he scarcely needed the confirmation of the inscription he now read, in his own handwriting, upon the fly-leaf: "*To Muriel, April 23, 1913.*"

Why, the question rose in Prescott's mind through his astonishment, had she parted with it? Not, certainly, because of poverty; he had read less than a month before of her departure with a yachting party for the Mediterranean. An accident, Prescott decided, the bungling of some incompetent servant. Or perhaps it had been stoien. . . .

He wondered at her failure to recover it; pictured her anxiety, her fruitless search. He considered the idea of returning it to her, anonymously.

Prescott, pondering this matter, opened the book, started absently to shuffle its leaves. Perhaps he hoped that he might see on its pages evidences of her reading, annotations in her own remembered hand: Almost, that discovery now would compensate for the past eight years.

He stopped suddenly, stared, then allowed the book to fall to the floor.

Its leaves were uncut.



The Quarry

By John McClure

I WONDER as I walk,
Peering about the street,
After what strange prey stalk
These palpitating feet,

Men and women and men
Pattering to and fro—
Where can it be they have been,
Where do they think that they go?

Lights blink over my head,
The lights dazzle my eye:
There were torches in Egypt
Flickered as dazzlingly.

People under the torches
Hastened at evening then,
Hurrying people in Egypt,
Men and women and men.

Somewhere a quarry of some sort
That we are grim to meet
Quakes or laughs at the thunder
Of our advancing feet.



Efficiency

By T. F. Mitchell

CUPID had just shot an arrow at the heart of a young girl.

"How do you manage to keep supplied with arrows?" asked one of the gods. "That is the thousandth you have shot today."

Cupid laughed.

"Three months from now, on her wedding day," he answered, "I shall return and pluck it out of her heart."



Creed

By Paul Tanaquil

AFTER all, Life is no more
Than a monstrous dry-goods store;
The trouble is that you all try to be shop-lifters.



SELF-DENIAL—The faculty of doing without the numerous things it is futile to hope for.



INSURANCE—A scheme for providing your wife with the dowry for her second marriage.



The Marriage of Little Eva

[A Comedy in One Act.]

By Kenyon Nicholson

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

JIM THORNE, *who plays Uncle Tom*
SADIE MONTROSE, *who plays Eliza*
ALLEN PETTIBONE, *who plays Simon Legree*
HATTIE HALE, *who plays Little Eva*
ORIOLE, *her daughter*
WALLY WAMPLER, *proprietor and manager of the troupe*

SCENE: *The star dressing-room of the Grand Opera House, Almusville, Ind.*
TIME: *Just after the evening performance.*

It is a small triangular-shaped room with a door at the rear leading to the wings. Along the right wall hangs a cracked mirror outlined in electric light bulbs. Beneath the mirror is a shelf laden with various theatrical paraphernalia, including a battered make-up box. In the corner to the right of the door stands a wardrobe trunk, half open. Across its side is pasted the label: "Uncle Tom's Cabin Co." Down-stage, left, is a screen, which serves as a clothes rack. Before the screen stands a dilapidated sofa. The walls are white-washed, and adorned with several faded lithographs of past dramatic successes such as "Peck's Bad Boy," "Lena Rivers," and "Eight Bells."

As the curtain rises the exit march is heard emanating from the auditorium. The stage is empty save for a child of about eight years old, who lies asleep upon the sofa. It is Oriole, Hattie's daughter. In a moment Hattie Hale trips in. Her rather small figure is draped in a flowing robe of white cheese-cloth, which somewhat resembles a nightgown. To her back are fastened a pair of wings. She carries a gilded trumpet. She is Little Eva who has just been to heaven. Concerning Hattie's age there is some doubt. The audience who watch her sicken and die each night know nothing of the art of make-up. Hattie, however, does. Her eight-year-old daughter, coupled with the fact that this is her fifteenth season in the rôle of Eva, makes one suspect that she is not far from thirty.

HATTIE

(To her child.) You awake, Oriole?

(Receiving no answer HATTIE sits down before the mirror and begins to remove her make-up. She is plainly elated over something, and expresses her feeling by humming off-key. As she unhooks the angel's wings there comes a knock at the door.)

HATTIE

(Calling.) Who is it?

JIM

(Off.) It's me, Hat. Who'd you expect—one of the bloodhounds!

HATTIE

(Smiling.) Oh, come on in, Jim.

(Enter JIM THORNE. He is dressed

as Uncle Tom, the faithful but much abused negro servitor. He is about thirty-five years old, but in his character he would pass easily for twice that age.)

JIM

(Beaming at HATTIE.) Well, how's my little bride by now?

HATTIE

(Rising.) More in love with you every minute.

JIM

(Foolishly.) That's the way I like to hear you talk!

HATTIE

(Chidingly.) Jim, why haven't you got out of your make-up? It always takes you so long.

JIM

(Ecstatically.) Why, Hat, I just had to come in and see you. You know, a while ago I stood out there in the wings while the transformation was on, and I'll say you looked like a regular angel!

HATTIE

(Pleased.) Honest, Jim?

JIM

On the level. (Putting his arms around her.) Give us a kiss, Hat.

(HATTIE kisses him.)

JIM

(Looking at the black smudge of grease-paint that has rubbed off on her cheek.) Ha! Now look at your cheek!

HATTIE

(Happily.) I don't care.

JIM

(Pointing to mirror.) Say, Hat just look at our reflection there in the glass—a great big ugly darkey hugging a little white girl. (Laughing.) Who said mirrors don't lie!

HATTIE

(Peering in glass.) Wouldn't that picture make a Southerner's blood boil.

They'd lynch you before you had time to tell them you was white!

JIM

(Taking a chair.) Hand me your make-up towel, Honey, and I'll fix it where I rubbed off on you. (She hands him towel.) Here, sit on your daddy's knee, like a good little girl.

HATTIE

(In the high wavering voice of LITTLE EVA.) Yes, Uncle Tom.

JIM

(Rubbing her cheek.) You aren't sorry for what you did this afternoon, Hat?

HATTIE

(Playfully.) Well, I don't like to say yet, Jim. Who can tell if they're going to like their husband after six hours of being married?

JIM

I'm not bragging, understand, but I'll bet I make a better husband to you than Wally would of.

HATTIE

You know, Jim, I never considered Wally Wampler, really.

JIM

Well, you kept me in hot water all the time thinking you did.

HATTIE

Oh, Wally's not so worse, but he's not my kind of a man. (Pats him affectionately.)

JIM

If he wasn't manager of this troupe I'd of had you married to me while we was still playing in Ohio, instead of just this afternoon.

HATTIE

(Seriously.) Jim, we got to quit being afraid of Wally. Just because he holds the money and is our boss, it don't give him the right to do what he pleases!

JIM

I know, Hat, but it don't pay to make him jealous. He still does the hiring and firing, remember.

HATTIE

He wouldn't dare let two good actors like us go, even if he wanted to. How much of a show do you think he'd have left with us out?

JIM

Well, if it ever leaks out that we're married and he starts acting up, I'm going to stand right up to him and speak my mind.

HATTIE

(Encouragingly.) That's the only way to handle these managers. They respect you for it.

JIM

Besides Hat, I guess we won't starve. You know we've always got that fruit farm my old man left me up there in Berrien County. I guess I can make a living up there for you if I have to.

HATTIE

Course you can, Jim. When we were standing there being married in that pretty little parsonage, between the 'I do's' I couldn't help thinking how nice it would be if we could go up there right off, and settle down and have a home and everything, with you raising fruit.

JIM

It would be nice, but remember, Hat, we're saving that for our old age.

HATTIE

(Wistfully.) Sometimes, Jim, I feel awful old, now. I don't feel right any more, playing Eva. It's enough to make a dog sick when I get out there and pipe around. I don't want to be like Carrie Fontaine—die of old age in the part.

JIM

Don't worry about that, you're the prettiest Eva I ever played with!

(She starts to embrace him.) No, don't kiss me again—I just got you cleaned up!

HATTIE

(Rising.) Better go and get in your clothes now, so's we can get over to the car. Do we pull out tonight?

JIM

Sometime after midnight, Wally said.

(There is a knock at the door.)

ALLEN

(Off.) It's Al. Can I come in?

JIM

Sure!

(Enter ALLEN PETTIBONE, who plays LEGREE. Without his make-up he is a mild-mannered fellow, almost effeminate.)

ALLEN

(Cordially.) Well, how are the love-birds by this time?

HATTIE

Haven't scratched yet, have we, Jim?

JIM

Not so you could notice it!

ALLEN

(Glancing at the sleeping child.) What did Oriole say, Hattie, when you told her tonight that she had a new papa?

HATTIE

She just asked me for a piece of candy and rolled over and went to sleep.

JIM

Poor kid, she's too young to realize what it means.

ALLEN

Well, I'll say she's got a good daddy this time.

THE MARRIAGE OF LITTLE EVA

HATTIE

Thanks, Al. You and Sadie are the two best friends a woman ever had.

JIM

That goes for me, too, Al. And I want to thank you again for standing up with us at the parsonage. I hope I can do the same for you sometime.

ALLEN

Oh, it wasn't anything. Glad to do it.

JIM

(*Largely.*) Married life's the only life, believe me!

ALLEN

Are you sure that Wally never got wind of the wedding?

HATTIE

So far as we know he hasn't. That preacher swore he wouldn't give us away.

ALLEN

I know, but this is a small town, and things as exciting as marriages get out mighty quick.

JIM

We should worry who knows it after we get out of this burg.

ALLEN

(*Turning to go.*) Well, I'll be getting on out to the car. See you later.

(*ALLEN opens the door and SADIE MONTROSE enters. She is a middle-aged woman, looking more like a spinster than an actress. However, she has been on the stage practically all her life, and as Eliza has crossed the ice over five thousand times.*)

SADIE

(*Excitedly.*) Have you seen Wally yet?

JIM

No, what's the matter?

SADIE

I'm afraid he's found out about this afternoon.

HATTIE

(*Alarmed.*) What! You think he knows!

JIM

Why do you say that?

SADIE

I was out in the box-office a while ago, and he was raving mad about something, and—

JIM

He didn't say anything, did he?

SADIE

He said, "Well, they've turned their last trick on me," and then he kicked over a chair and yelled, "I'll show em!"

ALLEN

(*From doorway.*) Good God!

HATTIE

You don't *know* that he was talking about Jim and me, though.

SADIE

No, but I hurried back here just to tell you, so in case it was you'd be ready.

JIM

Well, that big stiff better not start anything around here, or he'll get the worst of it.

ALLEN

Sadie, we'd better make ourself scarce—just in case . . .

SADIE

Yes, we can't help you folks by mixing in. (*To Hattie*) Shall I take Oriole with me?

HATTIE

No, she's still asleep. There's no need to get scared as I can see. I've seen man-eating managers act up before. They're all bluff if you face them down.

SADIE

But, Wally

ALLEN

(Going to door.) Sadie and me will be outside waiting if you need us.

JIM

(Dubiously.) Thanks, old man, we'll be all right.

(SADIE and ALLEN exit.)

HATTIE

Now, Jim, you hustle on to your dressing-room and get out of that make-up, just as if nothing was going to happen. Besides, we don't know that Wally has heard. Maybe he wasn't talking about us.

JIM

Yes, but maybe he was! What if he comes in here and begins to insult you?

HATTIE

Never you mind, I've been insulted by better managers than Wally. I can take care of myself, don't you fret.

JIM

Well, you just hollow if he tries to pull any rough stuff before I get back.

(JIM goes out.)

(HATTIE removes her costume, and taking her street dress from the screen, she slips into it. Then, sitting before the mirror she removes a layer of grease-paint. She is thus engaged when there comes a knock at the door.)

HATTIE

(Firmly). Come in.

(Enters WALLY WAMPLER, a pop-eyed, heavy-set man wearing a soiled black and white check suit. He has the air of a shoe-drummer.)

WALLY

(Angrily.) What's all this I hear about you and Jim?

HATTIE

(Feigning surprise.) About me and

Jim. What are you talking about, Wally?

WALLY

Aw, come on, might as well can the stallin.' I've gotcha cold.

HATTIE

Oh, you mean—you mean—

WALLY

(Roaring.) Yes, I mean about you and Jim getting married!

(ORIOLE is suddenly awakened by WALLY's voice. She sits up, rubs her eyes and whimpers. She is a typical stage child, anæmic and pimply.)

HATTIE

Now you see what you did with your loud mouth. You waked up Oriole! (Tenderly to ORIOLE.) It's all right, baby, mama's here.

ORIOLE

(Whiningly.) Ain't it time to go down to the car, Mamma?

HATTIE

Don't say "ain't" darling.

ORIOLE

I want some candy, Mama.

HATTIE

No, you can't have any candy this late at night.

ORIOLE

(Persistently.) But I want some, Mama!

WALLY

(Exasperatedly.) For God's sake give her some to shut her up!

HATTIE

Just one piece then, darling. In the top lid of Mama's trunk.

(ORIOLE crosses to trunk, returns licking a huge piece of taffy.)

WALLY

(Loudly.) Well, let's have it. What

have you and Jim got to say for yourself?

HATTIE

Calm down, Wally, I'm not hard of hearing.

WALLY

It's true, ain't it?

HATTIE

Sure. We're not ashamed of it!

WALLY

Well, you ought to be! You two sneak out like a coupla love-sick calves and get a preacher when my back's turned.

HATTIE

Since when do we have to ask your permission?

WALLY

You're trying to make a monkey out of me and the show, and you know it!

HATTIE

It isn't so!

WALLY

Ain't it? How much business do you s'pose we'll do, when we blow in a burg and the customers find out that Tom and Eva are man and wife?

(Sarcastically.) Poor Uncle Tom and Little Eva married to each other!

HATTIE

Well, what's the odds?

WALLY

Damned if it's not immoral!

HATTIE

(Sharply.) I'll thank you not to curse before my child.

WALLY

I've been travellin' with a Tom show for the last twenty years and I never heard anything to beat it.

HATTIE

(Wearily.) Oh, cut out that bunk,

Wally. I'll tell you what's wrong with you, you're just mad because I took Jim instead of you.

WALLY

You hate yourself, don't you?

HATTIE

Well, I guess I can recognize the truth when I see it. Why don't you be a good sport and own up?

(There is a pause; WALLY finally advances toward her.)

WALLY

(More calmly.) Well, I won't say I don't care a lot for you, Hattie, and even now . . .

HATTIE

(Bristling.) Don't forget, Wally, I'm a married woman now.

WALLY

Yes, and you threw yourself away on a cheap actor.

HATTIE

(Threateningly.) Take care how you talk to me, Wally Wampler!

WALLY

(Disgustedly.) I thought you had more sense.

HATTIE

That's my own business.

(There is another pause; WALLY decides to take a new tack.)

WALLY

Of course, after what's happened Jim's gotta find him a new job.

HATTIE

How do you figure that?

WALLY

Why, I'm not goin' to have a coupla honeymooners playin' Tom and Eva with my show. Not so long as I'm still in my right mind. I'd be the laughin' stock of every other Tom show manager in the country.

HATTIE

(Viciously.) Wally, you're meaner than I thought you was!

WALLY

Call me what you like, but that goes.

HATTIE

You fire Jim Thorne, and you lose me, and *that* goes, too!

WALLY

Oh, I guess this troupe can worry along without you both if we have to. You don't throw any scare into me. The woods is full of actors.

(Enter JIM. He is in his street clothes.)

HATTIE

(Bursting into tears.) Jim, Wally's got ugly and gave you your notice!

(HATTIE crosses to the sofa and sits with her arm about ORIOLE, who pays no attention to her mother.)

JIM

(To WALLY.) Well, I won't accept it, do you hear?

WALLY

Oh, you won't, won't you.

JIM

No, I resign. Now that I got a wife I've made up my mind to leave the stage anyway. The road's no place for a married man.

WALLY

What are you goin' to do—starve to death?

JIM

(Masterfully.) I've got a fruit farm in Michigan; I don't have to work.

WALLY

Hah! It'll be an awful loss to the profession.

S. S.—Aug.—6

JIM

(Warming up.) None of your lip! I guess I haven't been playing the hot-stove circuit for ten years for nothing. I know a thing or two about this game myself.

WALLY

(Disparagingly.) Yeh, out here in the sticks!

JIM

Oh, I know I've never been featured on Broadway, or written up in the New York papers, but I've always kept working. And when it comes to long runs I can make Frank Bacon look like a supe. I've played Tom over three thousand times, against his one thousand in "Lightnin'."

WALLY

(Suspiciously.) What are you doin'—makin' me a speech?

JIM

Call it what you please—Hattie and me are leaving you cold.

WALLY

(Sneeringly.) You think I can't run this show without you and Hattie? Well, I never saw any hams yet that could put a show of mine on the hummer. I'll just call your little bluff. (Magnificently.) I'll play Tom myself!

JIM

(With a guffaw.) They'll egg you!

WALLY

Is that so? Well, it won't be the first time I've doubled as Tom since I been in this business.

JIM

I'll bet you give a great performance of Tom with that bay window of yours. It's like putting Sam Bernard in the part.

WALLY

(Wrathfully.) Never you mind, I'll handle that end of it.

HATTIE

What are you going to do for Eva?
Did you think of that?

WALLY

You'll go right on playin' it, my fine lady—married or not married. You forgot, I s'pose, that I gotta two-year contract with you.

JIM

You can't hold her against her will.

WALLY

(Deliberately.) Mebbo not and mebbo so.

HATTIE

(Frightenedly.) You know you can't, Wally Wampler.

WALLY

(Pointing a wicked finger at her.) Can't I? Say if you break your contract with me I'll sue you for holdin' up the show, and you'll make good every nickel I lose, if it takes your peach orchard and everything you own. So help me, I will!

JIM

Don't you talk to my wife that way!
(ORIOLE has exhausted her supply of candy, and begins to weep noisily.)

HATTIE

You big bully! You scared Oriole into crying again.

(There is a moment's confusion while ORIOLE is being quieted.)

WALLY

Sorry about that; I wouldn't harm a hair of the kid's head, you know it.

HATTIE

(To her moaning daughter.) Hush, Oriole, nothing's happened!

JIM

(Quietly.) Now, look here, Wally, no use getting loud about this thing. Let's reason it out.

WALLY

I'm willin' to listen to reason.

JIM

Now, let's see what this trouble's about. I've given you notice—

WALLY

(Stubbornly.) Call it that if you wanta.

JIM

And I want Hattie to come with me to the farm, and you won't let her because of her contract not having run out. That right?

(Wally nods.)

HATTIE

Shame on you, Wally, coming between man and wife!

JIM

Now, you keep out of this, Hat. Wally and me'll settle it. Now, Wally, if I could produce an Eva to take Hat's place to work out the rest of her contract, will you let Hat go to the farm with me without any trouble?

WALLY

What are you going to do—go out here and pick up some stage-struck Jane and run her in on me?

JIM

No, I'm on the level. I've got somebody in mind. Will yuh?

WALLY

I'll think about it.

HATTIE

You'd better think hard, Wally. If I haven't my heart in my work, I'm liable to be a pretty bad actress.

JIM

Ssh, Hat! All right, Wally, here's what I'm offering to do. Why not give Oriole a shot at the part?

WALLY

(Snorting.) Say, don't make me laugh!

JIM

You don't think she could handle it, do you? Well, you don't know.

WALLY

Too young! Who ever heard of an Eva bein' eight years old?

JIM

She's just the right age. She'd be a knock-out.

ORIOLE

(*Yawning.*) I wanta go down to the car, Mama.

HATTIE

Just a minute, darling. (*To Wally.*) Don't worry. She could do it, but I don't know as I want her to. She's only a kid, and to be knocking around on the road alone—

JIM

It'll only be till your contract runs out; besides, Sadie'll look out for her.

HATTIE

(*To Oriole.*) What do you say, darling, to being an actress like mama?

ORIOLE

I don't wanta.

HATTIE

But think, Oriole, you would get pretty lace dresses and ride in the pony cart in the parade every day.

ORIOLE

(*Manifesting a mild interest.*) And could I have lots of candy—whenever I wanted it?

HATTIE

(*Sweetly.*) Maybe you could, Pet.

ORIOLE

Well, then, I'd like to be an actress, Mama.

JIM

(*Triumphantly to WALLY.*) You hear what the kid says, she *wants* to be an actress.

WALLY

(*Sagely.*) Yeh, but that don't make her one.

JIM

Well, Oriole's got the goods. You tell him, Hat.

HATTIE

She knows Eva as well as I do just from watching me work, standing in the wings.

JIM

(*Urgingly.*) Put her through the death-bed scene—go on, just show Wally.

HATTIE

(*Rising.*) Oriole, stretch out flat on the couch. Take little short breaths like Mama showed you, and roll your eyes. Do this nice for Mama and she'll give you a nice present when we get back to the car. (*To JIM.*) You feed her the cues, Jim.

WALLY

(*Sitting.*) Well, I'm from Missouri.

(*HATTIE stands anxiously by, watching her daughter during the ensuing scene. WALLY lights a cigar.*)

JIM

(*Assuming the rôle of Uncle Tom.*) "Dat's all dar in de good book, jes' as I tol' you, Little Eva."

ORIOLE

(*In a wavering voice.*) "And is heaven all full of gold streets and angels, Uncle Tom?"

JIM

(*Kneeling by the side of sofa.*) "Yes, Little Eva, angels wid big white wings and carryin' harps."

ORIOLE

"Will I have a harp when I go to heaven, Uncle Tom?"

THE MARRIAGE OF LITTLE EVA

JIM

(*Business with handkerchief.*) "Don't talk dat way, Little Eva, you're breakin' my ole heart."

ORIOLE

"I hope you will always be a good man, Uncle Tom, and never do anything to vex your master. . . . Why is everything growing so dark, Uncle Tom? Is it evening? . . . I can hear bells ringing afar off."

(UNCLE TOM is wracked with sobs.)

ORIOLE

(*With the tremulo stop wide open.*) "Uncle Tom, I'm going far away. . . . I can hear the angels singing. Tell Topsy to be a good girl for my sake. Tell my mama to kiss my papa good-bye for me. Good-bye, Uncle Tom. . . . Good-bye. I will meet you all in heaven. . . ."

(ORIOLE sinks back upon her pillow.)

JIM

(*Rising from his knees.*) What'd I tell you, Wally!

WALLY

Well, slap me down dead, if you wasn't right! By God, the kid's there! She made the chills go up my back.

(*To ORIOLE.*) Come here, Oriole, come and give your Uncle Wally a big kiss!

(ORIOLE crosses reluctantly.)

HATTIE

(*Proudly.*) Didn't we tell you she could do it?

WALLY

All right, you win.

JIM

(*Eagerly.*) And will you let Oriole finish out her mother's contract?

WALLY

(*Irritably.*) Yes, yes, if you don't crow about it. Pack up; we've all gotta get over to the car.

JIM

(*Half to himself.*) Oriole's a born actress—a born actress!

HATTIE

(*Aside to Jim.*) Call Sadie and Al. They're somewhere outside there.

(JIM exits.)

WALLY

Hattie, you see what you done for yourself, dontcha? When you hooked up with Jim you put yourself right away in the has-been class.

HATTIE

Oh, I guess I can come back next season easy enough if I get tired of fruit-farming.

WALLY

(*Cynically.*) They never come back. I've seen what marryin' does too many times. In a year you'll be lookin' sloppy and middle-age. You're done for.

HATTIE

(*Feelingly.*) Well, what if I am? I've earned a rest. Since I was fifteen I've been living out of a trunk, playing under canvas, in town halls, skating rinks, and one-horse theatres, eating in beaneries that wasn't fit for dogs. I'm sick and tired of it, I tell you. I've earned a rest.

WALLY

Well, you'll sing a diff'runt tune after a year on a God-forsaken farm.

HATTIE

Maybe. But what I want worse than anything else just now is a home, a place where I can spread out and do my own cooking and make my own beds, and all those things that women are supposed to do.

WALLY

All right, sister, hop to it.

(*Enter SADIE and ALLEN, followed by JIM.*)

SADIE

Jim's just told us the news. I never heard anything to beat it!

ALLEN

We're all going to miss you and Jim, Hattie.

HATTIE

(*Tearfully.*) Thanks, Al. Sadie, as Oriole's godmother, I want to ask you if you won't look out for her and take care of her for the rest of the season.

SADIE

(*Putting her arm around HATTIE.*) I'll watch her as if she was my very own, you know that, Hattie.

HATTIE

Just the matter of candy that you have to watch her about—but I'll tell you about that later.

WALLY

Well, I'm goin' to mooch along down to the car. Tomorrow's Chugwater. We rehearse there at ten in the morning. Oriole for Eva and me for Tom. I can see where we're going to cut down some expenses by this new deal. (*Sheepishly.*) I s'pose I ought to offer my congratulations to the bride and groom. Well, here's good luck, if that'll do you any good.

(*WALLY stalks out.*)

ALLEN

That sure hurt him to say that.

JIM

Oh, I guess Wally means all right—it's just his way.

SADIE

Al, let's go on over to the car; Hattie and Jim'll want to be alone. Come on, Oriole, you go with us. You're going to be my little girl from now on, and you might as well get used to it.

ORIOLE

(*Petulantly.*) I don't want to be your little girl, Aunt Sadie!

HATTIE

(*Hurriedly.*) Here, Oriole, is a peanut-bar for you to eat on the way to the car.

JIM

So long. We'll be along as soon as we get packed up.

(*Exit SADIE, ORIOLE and ALLEN.*)

HATTIE

(*Breathing a sigh of relief.*) Well, things haven't turned out so bad, have they, Jim?

JIM

I don't know yet, Hat. We've both lost our jobs.

HATTIE

(*Ruefully.*) That's the only wedding present we got.

JIM

(*Sighing.*) Oh, it's all in a lifetime.

HATTIE

It certainly did me good to see the way you stood up to Wally. Jim, I'm proud of you.

JIM

Maybe I did wrong. I guess if I had got down on my knees to him he'd have taken me back. Life's going to be a lot different up there on that fruit farm.

HATTIE

(*Enthusiastically.*) Of course it'll be different. We'll make it a real home. We'll have chickens and a cow, and go to bed early every night, and get up early every morning. We'll be regular hicks.

JIM

The way you put it, it sure *sounds* good.

HATTIE

It's going to *be* good!

JIM

(*Grinning.*) Uncle Tom and Little Eva gone to farming! I guess that's good for a laugh!

HATTIE

(*Happily.*) Kiss me, Jim!

(*They embrace rapturously.*)

(*Curtain.*)

Coda

By Thomas Effing

THE three were watching a bridal couple entering a coach.

I

"A poor woman hoodwinked," said the sentimentalist.

II

"Another good man gone wrong," said the cynic.

III

"A lot of good rice wasted," said the utilitarian.



A Prayer in Autumn

By Marion M. Boyd

*NOT like a shrivelled, brown, dried flower
May I fade out;
But like a flaming crimson leaf,
Upon a day of Autumn light
May I blow, laughing, from your sight.*



ONE of the two topics of conversation in Pullman smoking-compartments is bootleg liquor.



Courage

By Walter B. Lister

I

AT Kenton College, where he had been 'varsity cheer leader and editor of the flamboyant weekly, Riggs Carter had sometimes confided to his associates at the fraternity house that he had a violent temper, which, when roused, knew no bounds.

Now, in the half darkness of his apartment, he told himself that he was fighting desperately to control that temper.

"I've got to keep myself in hand," he kept repeating, as he sucked in mouthfuls of cigarette smoke, vaguely conscious that the choking inhalations somehow soothed him.

In the bedroom, his bride of a week was sobbing, her face buried among the pillows, her feet thumping the springs in futile despair. Carter rose and walked into the bedroom. He glanced at the dishevelled figure, turned away uncertainly, and studied himself in the mirror. He managed a crooked smile which satisfied him.

"Infinite sadness," he thought. "Infinite courage."

He bent over his wife.

"Margie, I've been thinking pretty seriously. I guess this is the most terrible hour in my whole life. A man who has ideals, you know, always thinks of his wife as pure and innocent. And—I can't forgive you, dear. Some things can't be forgiven."

She broke out into sobs again.

He whispered in her ear.

"But, dearest, maybe, if you helped me, I could forget—after a while. Now that you're married to me, I know you won't ever do it again."

The sobs slackened; soon she clung to him in a passionately tearful embrace. He allowed her that comfort for a time, and then released himself.

"Margie," he said earnestly, "I'm wondering what will happen when I meet Rawlings."

She seized his hands, murmuring, "I don't want you to meet him ever."

"Honey, you don't think I'm yellow? You don't think I could let what has happened pass without doing anything?"

He stood up and glanced in the mirror. The crooked smile was bitterer.

"Almost any jury would acquit me," he said slowly.

Margie stared at him in terror.

"Oh, Riggs," she cried, imploringly, "you wouldn't?"

He accentuated the smile, sadly.

"A gentleman's responsibilities may lead him to take the life of a yellow dog," he announced. "I'm not easily stirred up, but when I am—"

He thrust his head forward savagely.

"Do you think I can meet the man who has wrecked your life—yes, and mine, too—and not *do* anything?"

With an abrupt "Good night" he departed, shutting the door behind him.

II

CARTER remained deep in thought for many hours. Sidney Rawlings. It was inevitable that they should meet. Rawlings had been absent for six months. He was returning on Saturday. This was Wednesday. There remained three days.

"I've got a right to kill him," he muttered.

Murder. He shivered. Perhaps a jury wouldn't acquit him. There was Harry Thaw. . .

"There would be the scandal," he decided. "I can't publish Margie's shame."

He stared out of the window for a long time before he made his final decision. He would not kill Rawlings—not quite. But he would have his hands on his throat; he would beat and choke him into insensibility—humiliate him, kick him, spit in his face. The last thought pleased him. He saw Rawlings lying prostrate, his eyes pleading for mercy.

"You cur beneath contempt!" he would hiss, and spit full in his face.

Carter stretched himself complacently. That was settled. He tiptoed to the bedroom door and listened. Margie had cried herself to sleep; she was breathing more easily. He entered, undressed slowly, and lay down beside her. His last thought before dropping off to sleep was, "These are the tests that prove a man!"

All the next day Carter was impatient for the end of the week to arrive. A dozen times he caught himself leaning forward, fists clenched, ready to do battle. The evening passed quietly. Neither he nor Margie referred to the subject.

About ten o'clock he found himself possessed of a disturbing doubt. Could he whip Rawlings in an encounter? He smiled grimly at the thought. He *would*—or die trying.

"I've got the right on my side," he told himself. His sleep was broken by bad dreams. He met Rawlings and fought with him many times. Invariably he was victor. In the most vivid dream of all, he was driving an automobile along the main street of the city. Suddenly he caught sight of Rawlings amid a throng on the sidewalk. Instantly he put on the brakes, leaped to the curb, and ran toward him. Rawlings turned, saw him coming, and stopped dead, his face blanched with guilty fear. Carter launched his first blow when he was still several feet away, and it caught

Rawlings on the point of the jaw. He winced sharply in pain, raising his hands in an effort at defense; but Carter brushed them aside and struck again—again—again—until the other collapsed and slid weakly to the sidewalk. Then Carter kicked him in the side of the head, and spat. Turning to the crowd which had assembled he explained, calmly, "He deserved what he got. He's the lowest hound in hell." And as he walked away he saw that the people were nodding their heads in approval.

Carter awoke from his dream in cold terror. He sat up, staring at the bedroom windows. Could he? Could he really?

He was trembling when he lay down again; instinctively he crept closer to his wife for comfort.

III

FRIDAY was a day of paralyzing doubt. It ended with the same resolve; he would thrash Rawlings or die trying to. Furtively he performed some calisthenics, and debated taking lessons in boxing.

Saturday had for him the dull, hopeless feeling that comes to a soldier before an attack, to a football player as the two elevens line up for the kick-off, to a fighter as he sits in his corner before the first round. Carter had committed himself; he was now drifting.

Noon came. He decided not to risk meeting Rawlings downtown, and went back to his apartment. A public brawl, he reasoned, would make talk. It was for Margie's sake. She would die rather than have anyone know. . . But if he fought Rawlings anywhere, their meeting must become known. There were always interfering bystanders, policemen. . . It might reach the newspapers. "Local College Man in Street Fight," and so on. Besides, did fists ever settle a question? Was it a gentlemanly method?

Would it not be more effective to cut him? Wait until Rawlings called a

hearty greeting, and then glance quietly at his outstretched hand with a contemptuous shake of the head. Stare at him. Sneer. Make him walk away like a whipped mongrel. Bruises would heal, but not the feeling of degradation which such treatment would bring. Make him suffer in his pride! That was it!

Carter reached for his hat.

"Where are you going?" Margie called in alarm.

He smiled sadly.

"Just for a walk. I need a little air."

Margie's frightened eyes pleaded with him. She knew that Rawlings was expected then.

"If . . . you'll be *careful*, honey?"

His lips curved in apparent resignation.

"All right. If you wish it."

At the door, he looked back. Margie was bent over in the rocker, weeping softly.

IV

CARTER was immensely conscious of the superiority of his new method of attack. The cut direct. The profoundest insult a gentleman could offer. He repeated, "It proves a man—how he meets a test like this."

The doorbell rang as he was on the last flight of stairs. He paused in sudden timidity. It might be. . .

His muscles tightened. Yes it *might* be Rawlings, perhaps come to see . . . Margie. He hurried to the door, and with a violent pull flung it wide open.

It was Rawlings, healthy, prosperous, grinning broadly. He stretched out a hand.

"H'are you, Riggy, my boy? How's she go?"

Carter's smile was ghastly in its absolute lack of affectation.

"H—how are you, Rawlings," he said.



EVERY man believes that he could be a first-class rascal if he wanted to, and every woman at some period in her life dreams of entering a nunnery.



*I*N man, there is a constant warfare between his heart and his head. In woman, between the various likings of her heart.



*A*N hour's listening furnishes a woman with a week's talk.



The Old Perplexity

By Oscar Williams

I

BEAUTY is waving her silver rains
Above the hills, now the night is gone;
The lips of the valley part in wonder,
Earth is breathless in the silver dawn.

And far away where the cities dream,
Where beauty falters and wonder dies,
A soft blue glowing fills the pavements
Like dawning gladness in shadowy eyes.

II

But all the dusks are the phantom seas
That flooded the world in forgotten years,
And all the winds are unborn sorrows,
And all the stars are luminous tears.

And there is one afraid of the night
Who raised gray walls around bits of space;—
And under the darkness the lamp-light burns,
And under the lamp-light an evil face . . .

III

But who may fathom beauty's ways,
The strange hushed secrets of the dancer?—
She sweeps the hills with silver rains
And cries, "The question is the answer!"

And I would be content to feel,
When I am through with dusty care,
About me in the dream of dreams
The darkness for her loosened hair. . .



Master of Fallen Years

By Vincent O'Sullivan

I

SEVERAL years ago, I was intimately acquainted with a young man named Augustus Barber. He was employed in a paper-box manufacturer's business in the city of London. I never heard what his father was. His mother was a widow and lived, I think, at Godalming; but of this I am not sure. It is odd enough that I should have forgotten where she lived, for my friend was always talking about her. Sometimes he seemed immensely fond of her; at other times almost to hate her; but whichever it was, he never left her long out of his conversation. I believe the reason I forget is that he talked so much about her that I failed at last to pay attention to what he said.

He was a stocky young man, with light-coloured hair and a pale, rather blotchy complexion. There was nothing at all extraordinary about him on either the material or spiritual side. He had rather a weakness for gaudy ties and socks and jewelry. His manners were a little boisterous; his conversation altogether personal. He had received some training at a commercial school. He read little else than the newspapers. The only book I ever knew him to read was a novel of Stevenson's, which he said was "too hot for blisters."

Where, then, in this very commonplace young man, were hidden the elements of the extraordinary actions and happenings I am about to relate? Various theories offer; it is hard to decide. Doctors, psychologists whom I have consulted, have given different

opinions; but upon one point they have all agreed—that I am not able to supply enough information about his ancestry. And, in fact, I know hardly anything about that.

This is not, either, because he was uncommunicative. As I say, he used to talk a lot about his mother. But he did not really inspire enough interest for anybody to take an interest in his affairs. He was there; he was a pleasant enough fellow; but when he had gone you were finished with him till the next time. If he did not look you up, it would never occur to you to go and see him. And as to what became of him when he was out of sight, or how he lived—all that, somehow, never troubled our heads.

What illustrates this is that when he had a severe illness a few years after I came to know him, so little impression did it make on any one that I cannot now say, and nobody else seems able to remember, what the nature of the illness was. But I remember that he was very ill indeed; and one day, meeting one of his fellow-clerks in Cheapside, he told me that Barber's death was only a question of hours. But he recovered, after being, as I heard, for a long time in a state of lethargy which looked mortal.

It was when he was out again that I—and not only myself but others—noticed for the first time that his character was changing. He had always been a laughing, undecided sort of person; he had a facile laugh for everything; he would meet you and begin laughing before there was anything to laugh at. This was certainly harmless, and he had a de-

served reputation for good-humour.

But his manners now became subject to strange fluctuations which were very objectionable while they lasted. He would be overtaken with fits of sullenness in company; at times he was violent. He took to rambling in strange places at night, and more than once he appeared at his office in a very battered condition. It is difficult not to think that he provoked the rows he got into himself. One good thing was that the impulses which drove him to do such actions were violent rather than enduring; in fact, I often thought that if the force and emotion of these bouts ever came to last longer, he would be a very dangerous character. This was not only my opinion; it was the opinion of a number of respectable people who knew him as well as I did.

I recollect that one evening, as three or four of us were coming out of a music-hall, Barber offered some freedom to a lady which the gentleman with her—a member of Parliament, I was told—thought fit to resent. He turned fiercely on Barber with his hand raised—and then suddenly grew troubled, stepped back, lost countenance. This could not have been physical fear, for he was a strongly-built, handsome man—a giant compared to the insignificant Barber. But Barber was looking at him, and there was something not only in his face, but, so to speak, *encompassing* him—I can't well describe it—a sort of abstract right—an uncontrolled power—a command of the issues of life and death, which made one quail.

Everybody standing near felt it; I could see that from their looks. Only for a moment it lasted, and then the spell was broken—really as if some formidable spectacle had been swept away from before our eyes; and there was Barber, a most ordinary looking young man, quiet and respectable, and so dazed that he scarcely heeded the cuff which the

gentleman managed to get in before we could drag our friend off. . . .

It was about this time that he began to show occasionally the strangest interest in questions of art—I mean, strange in him whom we had never known interested in anything of the kind. I am told, however, that this is not so very remarkable, since not a few cases have been observed of men and women, after some shock or illness, developing hitherto unsuspected aptitude for painting or poetry or music. But in such cases the impulse lasts continuously for a year or two, and now and then for life.

With Barber the crisis was just momentary, never lasting more than half an hour, often much less. In the midst of his emphatic and pretentious talk, he would break off suddenly, remain for a minute lost and dreaming, and then, after spying at us suspiciously to see if we had noticed anything strange, he would give an undecided laugh and repeat a joke he had read in some comic paper.

His talk on these art subjects was without sense or connection, so far as I could discover. Sometimes he spoke of painting, but when we put to him the names of famous painters, he had never heard of them, and I don't believe he had ever been in an art-gallery in his life. More often he spoke of theatrical matters. Coming back from a theater, he would sometimes fall to abusing the actors, and show the strongest jealousy, pointing out how the parts should have been played, and claiming roundly that he could have played them better. Of course, there were other times—most times—when he was alike indifferent to plays and players, or summed them up like the rest of us, as just "ripping" or "rotten." It was only when the play had much excited him that he became critical, and at such times none of us seemed willing to dispute with him, though we hardly ever agreed with what he was saying.

Sometimes, too, he would talk of

his travels, telling obvious lies, for we all knew well enough that he had never been outside the home-counties, except once on a week-end trip to Boulogne-sur-mer. On one occasion he put me to some confusion and annoyed me considerably before a gentleman whom I had thoughtlessly brought him with me to visit. This gentleman had long resided in Rome as agent for an English hosiery firm, and he and his wife were kindly showing us some photographs, picture-postcards, and the like, when, at the sight of a certain view, Barber bent over the picture and became absorbed.

"I have been there," he said.

The others looked at him with polite curiosity and a little wonder. To pass it off I began to mock.

"No," he persisted, "I have seen it."

"Yes, at the moving-pictures."

But he began to talk rapidly and explain. I could see that the gentleman and his wife were interested and quite puzzled. It would seem that the place he described—Naples, I think it was—resembled broadly the place they knew, but with so many differences of detail as to be almost unrecognizable. It was, as Mrs. W. said afterward, "like a city perceived in a dream—all the topsyturvydom, all the mingling of fantasy and reality"....

After outbursts of this kind, he was generally ill—at least he kept his bed and slept much. As a consequence, he was often away from the office; and whenever I thought of him in those days, I used to wonder how he managed to keep his employment.

II

ONE foggy evening in January, about eight o'clock, I happened to be walking with Barber in the West End. We passed before a concert-hall, brilliantly lighted, with a great crowd of people gathered about the doors, and I read on a poster that a

concert of classical music was forward at which certain renowned artists were to appear. I really cannot give any sort of reason why I took it into my head to go in. I am rather fond of music, even of the kind which requires a distinct intellectual effort; but I was not anxious to hear music that night, and in any case, Barber was about the last man in the world I should have chosen to hear it with. When I proposed that we should take tickets, he strongly objected.

"Just look me over," he said. "I ain't done anything to you that you want to take my life, have I? I know the kind of merry-go-round that goes on in there, and I'm not having any."

I suppose it was his opposition which made me stick to the project, for I could not genuinely have cared very much, and there was nothing to be gained by dragging Barber to a concert against his will. Finally, seeing I was determined, he yielded, though most ungraciously.

"It'll be the chance of a life-time for an hour's nap," he said as we took our seats, "if they only keep the trombone quiet."

I repeat his trivial sayings to show how little there was about him in manner or speech to prepare me for what followed.

I remember that the first number on the programme was Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. This work, as is well known, is rather long, and so, at the end of the third movement, I turned and looked at Barber to see if he was asleep. But his eyes were wide open, feverish, almost glaring; he was twining and untwining his fingers and muttering excitedly. Throughout the fourth movement he continued to talk incoherently.

"Shut up!" I whispered fiercely. "Just see if you can't keep quiet, or we shall be put out."

I was indeed very much annoyed, and some people nearby were turning in their chairs and frowning. . .

I do not know whether he heard what I said: I had no chance to talk to him. The applause had hardly died away at the end of the symphony when a singer appeared on the stage. Who he was, or what music he sang, I am utterly unable to say; but if he is still alive it is impossible that he should have forgotten what I relate. If I do not remember him, it is because all else is swallowed up for me in that extraordinary event.

Scarcely had the orchestra ceased preluding and the singer brought out the first notes of his song, than Barber slowly rose from his seat.

"That man is not an artist," he said in a loud and perfectly final voice. "I will sing myself."

"Sit down, for God's sake! . . . The management . . . the police." . . .

Some words like these I gasped, foreseeing the terrible scandal which would ensue, and I caught him by the arm. But he shook himself free without any difficulty, without even a glance at me, and walked up the aisle and across the front of the house toward the little stairs at the side which led up to the platform. By this time the entire audience was aware that something untoward was happening. There were a few cries of "Sit down! Put him out!" An usher hastened up as Barber was about to mount the steps.

Then a strange thing happened.

As the usher drew near, crying out angrily, I saw Barber turn and look at him. It was not, as I remember, a fixed look or a determined look; it was the kind of untroubled careless glance a man might cast over his shoulder who heard a dog bark. I saw the usher pause, grow pale and shamefaced feel like a servant who has made a mistake; he made a profound bow and then—yes, he actually dropped on his knees. All the people saw that. They saw Barber mount the platform, the musicians cease, the singer and the conductor give way before him. But never a word was said—there was a perfect

hush. And yet, so far as my stunned senses would allow me to perceive, the people were not wrathful or even curious; they were just silent and collected as people generally are at some solemn ceremonial. Nobody but me seemed to realize the outrageousness and monstrosity of the vulgar-looking, insignificant Barber there on the platform, holding up the show, stopping the excellent music we had all paid to hear.

And in truth I myself was rapidly falling into the strangest confusion. For a certain time—I cannot quite say how long—I must hold on to realities. The London concert-hall, with its staid, rather sad-looking audience, vanished, and I was in a great white place inundated with sun—some vast luminous scene. Under a wide caressing blue sky, in the dry and limpid atmosphere, the white marble of the buildings and the white-clad people appeared as against a background of an immense blue veil shot with silver. It was the hour just before twilight, that rapid hour when the colours of the air have a supreme brilliance and serenity, and a whole people, impelled by some indisputable social obligation, seemed to be reverently witnessing the performance of one magnificent man of uncontrollable power, of high and solitary grandeur. . . .

Barber began to sing.

Of what he sang I can give no account. The words seemed to me here and there to be Greek, but I do not know Greek well, and in such words as I thought I recognized, his pronunciation was so different from what I had been taught that I may well have been mistaken.

I was so muddled, and, as it were, transported, that I cannot say even if he sang well. Criticism did not occur to me; he was there singing and we were bound to listen. As I try to hear it, now, it was a carefully trained voice. A sound of harps seemed to accompany the singing;

perhaps the harpists in the orchestra touched their instruments. . . .

How long did it last? I have no idea. But it did not appear long before all began to waver. The spell began to break; the power by which he was compelling us to listen to him was giving out. It was exactly as if something, a mantle or the like, was falling from Barber.

The absurdity of the whole thing began to dawn on me. There was Barber, an obscure little Londoner, daring to interrupt a great musical performance so that the audience might listen to him instead! Probably because I was the only one on the spot personally acquainted with Barber, I was perceiving the trick put upon us sooner than the rest of the audience; but they too were becoming a little restless, and it would not be long ere they fully awoke. One thing I saw with perfect clearness and some terror, and that was that Barber himself realized that his power was dying within him. He appeared to be dwindling, shrinking down; in his eyes were suffering and a terrible panic—the distress of a beaten man appealing for mercy. The catastrophe must fall in a minute. . . .

With some difficulty I rose from my place and made for the nearest exit. My difficulty came, not from the crowd or anything like that, but from an inexplicable sensation that I was committing some crime by stirring while Barber was on the stage, and even risking my life.

Outside it was raining.

I walked away rapidly, for although I was, to a certain extent, under the influence of the impression I have just described, some remains of common-sense urged me to put a long distance between myself and the concert-hall as soon as possible. I knew that the hoots and yells of fury and derision had already broken loose back there. Perhaps Barber would be taken to the police-

station. I did not want to be mixed up in the affair. . . .

But suddenly I heard the steps of one running behind me. As I say, it was a wet night, and at that hour the street was pretty empty. Barber ran up against me and caught my arm. He was panting and trembling violently.

"You fool!" I cried furiously. "Oh, you fool!" I shook myself free of his hold. "How did you get out?"

"I don't know," he panted. "They let me go . . . that is, as soon as I saw that I was standing up there before them all, I jumped off the stage and bolted. Whatever made me do it? My God, what made me do it? I heard a shout. I think they are after me."

I hailed a passing cab and shoved Barber inside, and then got in myself. I gave the cabman a fictitious address in Kensington.

"Yes," I said fiercely. "What made you do it?"

He was bunched in a corner of the cab, shuddering like a man who has just had some great shock, or who has been acting under the influence of a drug which has evaporated and left him helpless. His words came in gasps.

"If you can tell me that!—God, I'm frightened! I'm frightened! I must be crazy. Whatever made me do it? If they hear of it at the office I'll lose my job."

"They'll hear of it right enough, my boy," I sneered, "and a good many other people too. You can't do these little games with impunity."

I caught sight of the clock at Hyde Park corner. It was near a quarter to ten.

"Why," I said, "you must have been up there over twenty minutes. Think of that!"

"Don't be so hard on me," said Barber miserably. "I couldn't help it."

And he added in a low voice: "It was the *Other*."

I paid off the cab, and we took a 'bus which passed by the street where Barber lived. All the way I continued to reproach him. It was not enough for him to play the fool on his own account, but he must get me into a mess too. I might lose my work through him.

I walked with him to his door. He looked extremely ill. His hand trembled so badly that he could not fit his latch-key. I opened the door for him.

"Come up and sit with a fellow," he ventured.

"Why?"

"I'm frightened. . . ."

"I believe," I said roughly, "that you've been drinking—or drugging."

I shoved him inside the house, pulled the door closed, and walked away down the street. I was very angry and disturbed, but I felt also the need to treat Barber with contempt so as to keep myself alive to the fact that he was really a mere nothing, a little scum on the surface of London, of no more importance than a piece of paper on the pavement. For—shall I confess it?—I was even yet so much under the emotion of the scene back there in the concert-hall that I could not help regarding him still with some mixture of respect and—yes, absurd as it may sound, of fear.

III

It was nearly a year before I saw Barber again. I heard that he had lost his place at his office. The cashier there, who told me this, said that although the young man was generally docile and a fair worker, he had in the last year become very irregular, and was often quarrelsome and impudent. He added that Barber could now and then influence the management—"when he was not himself," as the cashier put it—or they would not have tolerated him so long.

"But this was only momentary," said the cashier. "He was more often weak and feeble, and they took a good opportunity to get rid of him. He was uncanny," ended the cashier significantly.

I cannot imagine how Barber existed after he lost his place. Perhaps his mother was able to help a little. On the day I met him, by mere chance in the street, he looked sick and miserable; his sallow face was more blotchy than ever. Whether he saw me or not I don't know, but he was certainly making as if to go by when I stopped him. I told him he looked weak and unwell.

"Trust you to pass a cheery remark!" And he continued irritably:

"How can you expect a chap to look well if he has something inside him stronger than himself forcing him to do the silliest things? It *must* wear him out. I never know when it will take me next. I'm here in London looking for a job to-day, but even if I find one, I'm sure to do some tom-fool thing that will get me the sack."

He passed his hand across his face. "I'd rather not think about it."

I took pity on him, he looked so harassed, and I asked him to come on to a Lyons restaurant with me and have a bit of lunch. As we walked through the streets, we fell in with a great crowd, and then I remembered that some royal visitors were to proceed in great state to the Mansion House. I proposed to Barber that we should go and look at the procession, and he agreed more readily than I expected.

In fact, after a while, the crowd, and the rumour, and the stirring of troops as they fell into position, evidently wrought on him to a remarkable degree. He began to talk loud and rather haughtily, to study his gestures; there was infinite superiority and disdain in the looks he cast on the people. He attracted the attention and, I thought, the derision of those close to us, and I became

rather ashamed and impatient of those ridiculous airs. Yet I could not help feeling sorry for him. The poor creature evidently suffered from megalomania—that was the only way to account for his pretentious notions of his own importance, seeing that he was just a needy little clerk out of work. . . .

The place from which we were watching the procession was a corner of Piccadilly Circus. The street lay before our eyes bleached in the sun, wide and empty, looking about three times as large as usual, bordered with a line of soldiers and mounted police, and the black crowd massed behind. In a few minutes the procession of princes would sweep by. There was a hush over all the people.

What followed happened so quickly that I can hardly separate the progressive steps. Barber continued to talk excitedly, but all my attention being on the scene before me, I took no heed of what he said. Neither could I hear him very plainly. But it must have been the ceasing of his voice which made me look around, when I saw he was no longer by my side.

How he managed, at that moment, to get out there I never knew, but suddenly in the broad vacant space, fringed by police and soldiery, I saw Barber walking alone in the sight of all the people.

I was thunderstruck. What a madman! I expected to hear the crowd roar at him, to see the police ride up and drag him away.

But nobody moved; there was a great stillness; and before I knew it my own feelings blended with the crowd's. It seemed to me that Barber was in his right place there: this mean shabby man, walking solitary, was what we had all come to see. For his passage the street had been cleared, the guards deployed, the houses decked.

It all sounds wild, I know, but the

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whole scene made so deep an impression on my mind that I am perfectly certain as to what I felt while Barber was walking there. He walked slowly, with no trace of his usual shuffling uncertain gait, but with a balanced cadenced step, and as he turned his head calmly from side to side his face seemed transfigured. It was the face of a genius, an evil genius, unjust and ruthless—a brutal god. I felt, and no doubt everyone in the crowd felt, that between us and that lonely man there was some immense difference and distance of outlook and will and desire.

I could follow his progress for several yards. Then I lost sight of him. Almost immediately afterward I heard a tumult—shouts and uproar—

Then the royal procession swept by.

IV

I SAID to Mr. G. M., "Whether he was arrested that day, or knocked down by the cavalry and taken to a hospital, I don't know. I have not seen or heard of him till I got that letter on Wednesday."

Mr. G. M., who is now one of the managers of a well-known tobacco-firm, had been in the same office as Barber, and notwithstanding the disparity of age and position, had always shown a kindly interest in him and befriended him when he could. Accordingly, when I received a letter from Barber begging in very lamentable terms to visit him at an address in Kent, I thought it prudent to consult this gentleman before sending any reply. He proposed very amiably that we should meet at Charing Cross Station on the following Saturday afternoon and travel in to Kent together. In the train we discussed Barber's case. I related all I knew of the young man and we compared our observations.

"Certainly," said Mr. G. M., "what you tell me is rather astonishing. But the explanation is simple

as far as poor Barber is concerned. You say he has been often ill lately? Naturally, this has affected his brain and spirits. What is a little more difficult to explain is the impression left by his acts on you and other spectators. But the anger you always experienced may have clouded your faculties for the time being. Have you inquired of anybody else who was present on these occasions?"

I replied that I had not. I had shrunk from being identified in any way with Barber. I had to think of my wife and children. I could not afford to lose my post.

"No," rejoined Mr. G. M., "I can quite understand that. I should probably have acted myself as you did. Still, the effect his performances have had on you, and apparently on others, is the strangest element in Barber's case. Otherwise, I don't see that it offers anything inexplicable. You say that Barber acts against his will—against his better judgment. We all do that. All men and women who look back over their lives must perceive the number of things they have done which they had no intention of doing. We obey some secret command; we sail under sealed orders. We pass by without noticing it some tiny fact which, years later, perhaps, influences the rest of our lives. And for all our thinking, we seldom can trace this tiny fact. I myself cannot tell to this day why I did not become a Baptist minister. It seems to me I always intended to do this, but one fine afternoon I found I had ended my first day's work in a house of business.

"Much of our life is unconscious; even the most wide-awake of us pass much of our lives in dreams. Several hours out of every twenty-four we pass in a dream state; we cannot help carrying some of those happy or sinister adventures into our waking hours. It is really as much our habit to dream as to be awake. Perhaps we

are always dreaming. Haven't you ever for a moment, under some powerful exterior shock, become half-conscious that you should be doing something else from what you are actually doing? But with us this does not last; and as life goes on such intimations become dimmer and dimmer. With subjects like Barber, on the other hand, the intimations become stronger and stronger, till at last they attempt to carry their dreams into action. That is the way I explain this case."

"Perhaps you are right."

V

THE house where Barber was lodging stood high up on the side of a hill. We reached it after a rather breathless climb in the rain. It was a shepherd's cottage, standing quite lonely. Far down below the village could be seen with the smoke above the red roofs.

The woman told us that Barber was in, but she thought he might be asleep. He slept a lot.

"I don't know how he lives," she said. "He pays us scarce anything. We can't keep him much longer."

He was fast asleep, lying back in a chair with his mouth half-open, wrapped in a shabby overcoat. He looked very mean; and when he awoke it was only one long wail on his hard luck. He couldn't get any work. People had a prejudice against him; they looked at him askance. He had a great desire for sleep—couldn't somehow keep awake.

"If I could tell you the dreams I have!" he cried fretfully. "Silliest rotten stuff. I try to tell 'em to the woman here or her husband sometimes, but they won't listen. Shouldn't be surprised if they think I'm a bit off. They say I'm always talking to myself. I'm sure I'm not. . . I wish I could get out of here. Can't you get me a job?" he asked, turning to Mr. G. M.

"Well, Gus, I'll see. I'll do my best."

"Lummy!" exclaimed Barber excitedly, "you ought to see the things I dream. I can't think where the bloomin' pictures come from. And yet I've seen it all before. I know all those faces. They are not all white. Some are brown like Egyptians, and some are quite black. I've seen them somewhere. Those long terraces and statues and fountains and marble courts, and the blue sky and the sun, and those dancing girls with the nails of their hands and feet stained red, and the boy in whose hair I wipe my fingers, and the slave I struck dead last night—"

His eyes were delirious, terrible to see.

"Ah," he cried hoarsely, "I am stifling here. Let us go into the air."

And indeed he was changing so much—not essentially in his person, though his face had become broader, intolerant, domineering and cruel—but there was pouring from him so great an emanation of power that it seemed to crack and break down the poor little room. Mr. G. M. and myself had no desire to thwart him, and it never occurred to us to do so. We should as soon have thought of stopping a thunderstorm. We followed him outside on to the space of level ground before the house and listened humbly while he spoke.

As well as I can recollect, he was lamenting some hindrance to his impulses, some flaw in his power. "To have the instincts of the ruler and no slaves to carry out my will. To wish to reward and punish and to be deprived of the means. To be the master of the world, but only in my own breast—Oh, fury! The plough-boy there is happy, for he has no longings outside of his simple round life. While I—if I had the earth in my hand, I should want a star. Misery! Misery!"

He leaned upon a low stone wall and looked down on the town, over the pastures blurred with rain.

"And those wretches down there," he pronounced slowly, "who jeer at me when I pass and insult me with impunity, whose heads should be struck off, and I cannot strike them off! I loathe that town. How ugly it is! It offends my eyes."

He turned and looked us full in the face and our hearts became as water.

"Burn it," he said.

Then he turned away again and bowed his head in his arms on the wall.

VI

I DON'T remember anything clearly till a long time afterward, when I found myself walking with Mr. G. M. in the wet night on a deserted road on the outskirts of the town. We were carrying some inflammable things, flax, tar, matches, etc., which we must have purchased.

Mr. G. M. stopped and looked at me. It was exactly like coming out of a fainting fit.

"What are we doing with this gear?" he said in a low voice.

"I don't know."

"Better chuck it over a hedge. . ."

We made our way to the station in silence. I was thinking of that desolate figure up there on the hill, leaning over the wall in the dark and the rain.

We caught the last train to London. In the carriage Mr. G. M. began to shiver as though he were cold.

"Brrr! that fellow got on my nerves," he said; and we made no further allusion to the matter.

But as the train, moving slowly, passed a gap which brought us again in sight of the town, we saw a tongue of flame stream into the sky.



Scylla, Charybdis, Et Al

By June Gibson

I

SHE kissed him noisily, like a child.
It occurred to him that he did not
deserve her trust, that he was un-
worthy.

II

SHE kissed him gently, her lips
pressed against his.

He felt that he could rise to untold
heights.

III

SHE kissed him, sobbing, her mouth
quivering.

The beauty of moonlight across still
water, the loveliness of dewdrops on
heliotrope blooms, the daintiness of lily
buds, came to him.

IV

SHE kissed him noiselessly.
He departed under cover of night.



FLOWERS always smell the same whether they are part of a "Success to You"
horseshoe in a newly-opened restaurant, part of a wedding bouquet, or part
of a funeral wreath.



FAITHLESSNESS is frequently brought about by a sense of waste of clever
technique and the need for an appreciative audience.



LOVE is a guest. Marriage, a boarder.



The Prosaic Conclusion

By Lilith Benda

I

SHE had "spine." It was that which from the first attracted him—an attribute he prized in women, and found as unlike mere plebeian backbone as the carriage of a little Infanta of Spain must be unlike the posturings of a Junoesque milkmaid. Then, too, there was a shimmer about this woman, a winsome, virginal quality—above all else, an unutterable gentleness. Somewhere in the depths of her heavy-lidded gray eyes, chastened, almost obliterated, a tiny spark of mockery still lurked, such as might lurk in the tired eyes of a dethroned queen of elfdom.

II

HAVEN ISLAND shook from itself the stigma of an upper middle-class summer resort and blazoned forth, all of a smug fastidiousness, when the fashionable yacht clubs seized upon the advantages of its cozy harbor and fixed the finishing point of their annual races there. Almost overnight the Haven House acquired an Austrian *maitre d'hôtel*, a smart speak-easy in its innermost recesses, and a certain air of chaste, patrician license.

It was at the very dawn of its apotheosis that an exultant manager fawned a welcome into Stacey Milburn's bored, chill face, and, a moment later, scowled when he found the name of Justine Throckmorton registered among the new arrivals. For here among the *élites* and the *de luxes* Mrs. J. Morton Throckmorton was under a peculiarly ludicrous and somewhat unpleasant shadow.

Stacey Milburn, bachelor, sportsman, patron of the arts, lean, lazy, rangy and indisputably attractive in his yachting flannels, listened dully, when over their cocktails the matrons discussed the advent of the Throckmorton widow.

He understood that she was to be met with well-mannered but rigid exclusion. It was a matter of lineage, it seemed, that precluded severer methods of punishment—"after all, she was once a Philadelphia Merrion." . . . Milburn turned away with his usual air of bored detachment, not a little ashamed, as usual, of his air of bored detachment.

Stacey Milburn's chill air hid from the world a terrible, unconquerable shyness. Far more than his distaste, for no matter how gilded a humdrum existence, it was his shyness that had withstood the importunities of a long series of matchmaking mammas.

At forty he was lonely. His aloofness was all loneliness. The hero of many a spectacular amour discovered himself at times callow and maudlin at the memory of unattainable dream women of his youth. He still fought blushes, and, when his enthusiasm was aroused, a boyish, altogether likable stammer. And there were moments when he, who had achieved international repute as a horseman, a yachtsman, an art connoisseur, an engaging Lothario, found all this pallid and tasteless stuff, and let his mind drift to a cocksure and half-forgotten stripling's half-forgotten dreams—of becoming both a Tristan and a Congreve-and-Wycherley devil-among-the-girls—and a figure on horseback—and a sort of twentieth century doge of ancient Ven-

ice . . . It was one of the old, aromatic Tristan moods that recurred when first he saw Justine.

Prize lion of the evening and supreme achievement of the Haven House, he noted with amusement how abruptly attention swerved from him when Justine Throckmorton entered the dining-room. Half unwillingly he followed the general drift of interest toward this proud, frail cynosure.

With the prerogative of the patrician for deliberate rudeness, he let his gaze rest full upon her as very slowly, very tranquilly, she crossed the room. And then his soul began to writhe with the realization of an impending blush. Undeniably she had allure, this Justine, this woman who was under a ludicrous shadow, whose very entrance provoked a certain derisive snickering, this widow of a patent medicine king.

A conservative dinner dress of heavy black lace fell in long, regal, moyen age lines that accentuated her frail slenderness. They were wearing black lace this summer. It was, in fact, rather too much the usual thing. But through the long, loose sleeves, this woman's skin gleamed like soft silver. There were slight, exquisite curvings; there was a suggestion in her languid stroll of swift, supple motion.

A little straight nose and strong chin tallied with a bearing born of pride of race. She had "spine," and pale blonde hair—not overmuch of it, he noted—but fine as down and of that silvery lustre which Viennese beauties aim at and only very little children quite attain. She seemed, somehow, so inexpressibly gentle.

It was a half hour later when, over post-prandial liqueurs, the company had gathered in the basement café that—with the utmost serenity—she strolled to his table. It struck him then that her drowsy murmur seemed not so much a part of her as the shrill, sweet treble that rang out tintinnabular and child-like, after a moment.

He had been watching her while she sat alone at a corner table sipping a bit of Chartreuse. The matrons were meet-

ing with chagrin. For she faced aloofness with an aloofness so lazy, and wistful, and good-humored, as to render questionable the tactics employed against her.

The little room was full of smoke and high-pitched laughter. Milburn signed his check, and smiled down invitations from all sides. It was then that Justice Throckmorton arose and leisurely approached him.

"This sort of thing, you know," she murmured, "this sort of thing is such dreary tommyrot." Then suppressed excitement raising her voice, "Will you cavalier me around, please? I'm lonely."

He answered with an ineptitude, and realized, during the following hour, that he was cutting a poor figure, that he was blushing, stammering and becoming by degrees more and more abashed before her gentleness, before the great, tranquil sadness of this strange Justine. She provoked a tightening of the throat and a shakiness of the knee. . . .

Hers was no strict claim to beauty, he noted. There was too much of the nuance and the cadence in her face, too much of a haphazard irregularity. And the eyes and mouth failed to tally. She had quiet, gray eyes, slanting slightly with a chastened elfin half-glint in them—heavy-lidded eyes, vaguely troubled, finely lined, and with deep, purple shadows beneath them. . . . The eyes of a middle-aged woman who was sorry for many things. . . . And the mouth of a little child, full-lipped, scarlet and dewy, lifted habitually as if for kisses and comfortings.

He answered her polite murmurings with stammers and blushes. There were awkward silences between them. . . . Yet within an hour he had kissed her.

The dilettante Lothario in him was glad that she kissed without a hint of the pucker or the smack, while the Tristan mood intensified with the kiss—with the long, gentle clinging of dewy, parted lips that was a kiss from Justine.

And, strangely enough, when he had left her it was not so much the prospect of a grand *liaison* that occupied him as odd, shamefaced hankering for a hy-

menial venture, and moments of reverie concerning a hypothetical son. He grew depressed with the thought of the shadow that hung over her. If only it could be stripped of its ludicrous phases! If only she were anything—a wanton even, with a wanton's career behind her—anything but the quite estimable widow of a ridiculous mountebank . . . She was so inexpressibly gentle.

III

WITHOUT a hint of the pucker or the smack . . . Her kiss ingratiated.

Hard upon that unsatisfactory first hour they had entered the lift together, contentedly brazen before the wide-eyed conjecture of matrons and flappers. He was somewhat chagrined over his recent blushes and stammers, and brightened only when he learned that their rooms were on the same floor.

Leisurely they walked through the long, empty corridor. Milburn found it all rather foolishly thrilling—the absence of a quizzical floor clerk, the night light burning low, the thick carpet which silenced their footsteps, the quiet, the aloneness, the faint jingle of their keys, the gleam in the dimness of Mrs. Throckmorton's loveliness. Some of his shyness fell away from him.

"Where'd you get your walk of a long-ago Spanish Infanta?"

"Ankle weak—it slumped out"—after a pause came her sleepy murmur. "I have to be very careful of the way I walk. . . . And do you like my walk? . . . And do you think it makes me look sort of very grand—like a Castilian princess gone wrong, perhaps?"

"It makes me feel like a great grandee, ambling alongside of his little she-grandee." He stopped short, audacious at the smile on her full red lips. "You funny little gleaming thing—am I falling in love with you?"

Instantly she made a quick gesture of withdrawal, an awkward wave of the arms wherein compassion and yearning and regret were all strangely commingled. She walked on more quickly. After a moment,

"Are you going to be here long?" blandly she inquired.

"Only until tomorrow."

"Oh!"

"And you?"

"A week, if they're not too deadily—the hell-cats downstairs."

A pause and then, somewhat sulkily, he proffered an inane, "Well—"

"Well?"

"Care for a spin before breakfast? The hell-cats will be asleep, and the roads—"

"Oh, by all means."

And so it went until she halted at a side corridor and held out her hand.

"It's been very pleasant grabbing you away from them. They were all ready for ridicule. I'm sick of fighting ridicule, and no good at the game. I can keep my eyes cold, but my lips will shake. They've ridiculed my poor dead husband for years and years, you know . . . J. Morton Throckmorton. Have you heard of him?"

Raising her voice, she recited oratorically,

"Throckmorton's Rejuvenator—for That Tired Feeling. None Other Approaches—"

"Tomorrow morning," he interrupted sharply, still holding her hand. Already it hurt to have her refer to that shadow. "Shall I meet—"

"Do you know," she interrupted, in the most casual tones, in the sleepest of voices, almost as if she were talking in an effort to stifle a little lazy yawn, "Do you know that this is the most romantic moment of all my life?"

And now her laughter rang low, silvery like carillon chimes, and like the shimmer of her fair self. The heavy-lidded, finely lined eyes half closed. She raised her hands to his shoulders.

"I've met a fellow named Stacey Milburn. He's long and lean and suntanned. I like the way his nose starts in being imperial and ends up ingenuous. I like his ink-black hair all peppered with gray. I like his husky voice, and the way he stammers. I love his blush. Tomorrow morning I'm going for a spin before breakfast with him.

Tomorrow afternoon, if he likes, he may take me to a pine grove I've found, where it just teems sunlight and silence. We will go there and we'll talk about a very fine fellow—name of Stacey Milburn. . . . Is it a go?"

"I believe"—his voice was husky. He cleared his throat, and racked a renegade brain for a stray exquisite sentiment—"I believe . . . am I falling in love with you, funny little Justine?"

"I've met an engaging sort of fellow," her voice was barely audible now, "fellow by the name of Milburn. When he smiles, his smile is a mere lifting of a corner of the mouth. It doesn't lack charm, that smile. . . . Tell him to kiss me good night."

And he felt awed before the tenderness of her kiss, before the compassion and yearning and regret, all part of a long, happy, clinging of warm red lips.

He was unprepared for the transformation that followed. For she disengaged herself swiftly. Her hands clenched; her brow twisted. A big tear was rolling down her cheek.

"My husband"—she sobbed incoherently—"you mustn't laugh at my husband. He was a quack sincere in his quackery, and I wonder who isn't before God? If I'm to be sort of fond of you, don't laugh at him."

And then very quietly she drew away. "Remember before everything else, I am always J. Morton Throckmorton's widow."

He realized then that some obsession, something terrible, and pathetic, held her in its vise. Without another word he turned away. When he was almost at the end of the corridor her voice, high, shrill, clear, all its drowsiness eradicated, arrested him.

"Hi, there! . . . I say there! . . . this altogether likable sort of fellow . . . creature by the name of Milburn. What are his intentions, do you know? Honorable or matrimonial?"

He fell asleep, puzzled. Why did he find himself given to hazy hankerings for a wife and son, rather than to beatific speculation concerning a prospective amour? Why was she Mrs.

Throckmorton? And why was she so unutterably gentle? . . . The headiness of her he could withstand, but not her shy, troubled gentleness.

IV

PRIMARILY it was not J. Morton's *Infallible Rejuvenator* in itself that stamped its deviser a quack, so much as J. Morton's infallible methods of exploitation. The nostrum was merely one among innumerable general health tonics, all harmless, all hyperbolically promoted, and all comfortably within the drug laws. Throckmorton, however, had cried his wares in standard mountebank fashion so loudly, so pertinaciously, so successfully, as to place him in the ranks of the heavily-moneyed quasi-questionables.

The Throckmorton advertisements which, making their first appearance in unobtrusive corners of cheap magazines, blazoned ultimately from billboards, lacked even a grace of novelty. There were the usual "*Are you losing pep?*" "*Have you lost your stride?*" "*Are you depressed, exhausted, a failure?*" "*Would you regain the vigor of youth?*"—the usual before-and-after-using chromolithographs. In a corner there was always a likeness of the *Rejuvenator's* famed sponsor. Milburn remembered a surprisingly high-bred face, big black eyes, a sensitive nose and a long, white silky goatee.

Justine's world had been ready to condone the misalliance, for she was very young, deeply in debt, and with aged and dependent relatives on her hands when she married her charlatan. But since then the Merrion fortunes had miraculously risen. There were opportunities for a discreet divorce. And Justine refused them. "My wife has stuck through thick and thin." So the newspaper interviewers quoted J. Morton when, abask in the limelight, he was enjoying his one great, little hour. And to the forlorn finish Justine had stuck.

It was not until, a ripe fifty, he had arrived at that crucial time when, to the smugly successful, success just begins

to pall, and a hurried eye is cast over vaster fields for a crowning achievement on a vaster scale, that J. Morton Throckmorton emerged from the fringe of the solid-citizen class, and became a figure to invite alike a measure of awe and a sniggering contempt.

Patriotism on a prodigal scale, hit upon as his crowning achievement, conduced to the ultimate derision. With the advent of the world war it became Throckmorton's passion from his own peculiar angle to emulate the august dollar-a-year men. He put fifty thousand bottles of the *Rejuvenator* at the service of the national army. And few laughed, for he put as well sums of an astonishing magnitude at the service of the various war charity associations. He was well on the road to recognition as a high-minded citizen when he committed the tactical error of putting his life-story and dogmas at the service of the newspaper interviewers.

For not even a \$75,000 endowment for the benefit of war-babies was potent to counterweigh the effect of confidences concerning his "humble beginnings," concerning a humble cart drawn by a humble donkey through New England villages, with dramatic pauses on the various Main Streets wherein an ardent young mountebank shouted the praises of his nostrums.

A democracy quite in the habit of waxing panegyric over "humble beginnings" of the pushcart-peddling, pants-pressing, or pigtending varieties drew now a fine distinction, found itself affronted, and one of its cherished institutions desecrated. J. Morton's fashion, too, when speaking for publicity, of presenting every outworn ineptitude upon the democracy theme as a new and era-making revelation—a fashion quite at one with precedent long since established by the honored up-from-nowheres of a fair republic—met with sly mockery at the reporters' hands.

And the project wherewith he sought in a heroic glow to cap his effusions served only effectively to rouse the good-natured jeerers. Projects far more absurd had been granted a re-

spectful attention. Milburn remembered a certain peace ship. . . . But Throckmorton's plan to establish, far in the Catskill hinterland, a sort of latter-day Brooks Farm colony in the certitude of kinging it there among kindred souls, proved his undoing. Almost overnight he was laughed out of the fold of the distinguished notables.

And even at the end he seemed not to realize the outburst of good-humored raillery that topped his great limelight hour. He merely faded quietly out of the picture, and turned to the loneliness of his imitation Brooks Farm, and to the arms of his faithful Justine. Quite suddenly he died.

Undeniably, Milburn reflected, the fellow had struggled in a heroic glow, for no matter how tawdry and warped an ideal. And this seemed to stress the more subtly a disagreeable flavor about him, and to render the more outrageous his wife's staunchness. It was little wonder that in the face of so deliberate an adherence to an unpleasant absurdity Justine's world should decree her very identity lost, and brand her excommunicate.

Why, though, did some fugitive memory of the man hold her off at arms' length even when her lips clung willingly? She was shy, this Justine, virginal, and unutterably gentle. . . . Milburn wanted a wife, and a son.

V

"HELLO, monkey, want to match nickels?" Her thin fingers tweaked a snub nose.

Stretched on the sand and hidden from view by an abandoned lifeboat, Milburn remained without a word while an impudent six-year-old half-yanked, half-coaxed Justine to her knees. It was pleasant to watch her among the children who surrounded her always during the bathing hour. With them, the hazy sorrow of her seemed almost to obliterate itself, and the gay quality became more potent, and agreeably disturbing.

Over a week had passed since they

met. Still they remained indefinitely at the Haven House, immune to the ill-natured conjecture of the hell-cats, prey only to odd, intermittent moods of inexplicable sadness that tinged with a faint pathos the ardor of this sudden wooing.

There had been long, lazy sunlit hours in the pine grove and moments when moonlight spread an other-worldly white sparkle over Justine's complexion and hair, when the pounding of her heart against his as he kissed her, and the glad tears that welled in her eyes, filled him with something akin to worship. There had been hours at a time when he talked of himself, confided trivial projects and half-forgotten dreams, boasted a little, beatifically aglow at the silent "bravo" in her eyes, even while he was aware of polished strategy behind her naïve "Talk about Stacey Milburn."

And best of all there had been the queer, pent-up moment, all troubled intensity, quick handclaps, strange silences, snatched kisses, blushes, stammers, and little, dry sobs that topped the hushed laughter of Justine.

More often each day he wondered why while the golden riot of a supreme amour invited, the very thought of such a consummation repelled him. He wanted this woman for his wife; he found himself already incredibly fond of his hypothetical son, planning the youngster's future, and the re-establishment of an ancestral home.

It was somewhat plaguing that there should have been a certain grotesque figure in Justine's life—but, after all, quite inconsequential. What wounded was the consciousness of a secret something that held her from him even when he could feel her heartbeats, and that had left its mark in the tired serenity of her heavy-lidded eyes.

He rolled to one side now, the more readily to glimpse her averted profile. In the morning sunshine frock, complexion, hair, all shimmered. And always there was the silver note in her laughter that reminded him of sleepy chimes.

Another little boy trotted over to her.

"Odds you win. Want to play, too, son?"

"It's wrong."

"Wrong nothing! Who says so?"

"Mamzelle."

"Mamzelle is stupid. . . . If I had a youngster he'd know how to roll bones and buck the tiger before he'd know how to do his ten times ten. He'd learn to love old Lady Luck. Ever buck the tiger, monkeys?"

Milburn only half-heard her whispered heresies. He let his mind drift to memories of dead women and long-ago romances, wondering why, in her unhappy aloofness, this gentle Justine so forcibly suggested an unattainable archetype, so subtly epitomized all that had intrigued him among many and variant types of loveliness.

He saw her as a siren—but so winsome a siren! . . . of a dryad allure, fragrant, supple, white, slim-hipped, swift-moving, with the laughter of a wood sprite on her dewy lips and with the heavy-lidded eyes of a middle-aged woman who is sorry for many things.

"But I don't feel like telling fairy tales. Do you know why you like them? Because you want to be heroes. You want to smash giants' heads, and swing a wicked sword, and wink a wicked eye at the princesses who are tearing each other's eyes out over you. . . . Are you going to grow up to be a devil of a fighter, young ape of the somewhat Socratic nose . . . and a wild fellow among the girls?"

She leaned over, all maternal solicitude, abruptly bit the tip of an upturned nose.

And now Milburn saw her as a mother woman, a deified housewife—saw her reveling in homely details: blowing babies' noses, administering paregoric, saw her as the lady of his hearthstone tempering the housewife's proverbial concern over winter flannels perhaps with a secret, gloating desire to sew missing buttons on cast-off pajamas.

The hot noonday sunshine was turning the little boys from gentlemen of fortune to sleepy six-year-olds ready for naps and cuddling. Justine swept them

into her lap, began to sway from side to side in approved jazz fashion and to sing, very softly, and a little off the key:

*"Old King Cole, the merry old soul,
Fell for Mother Hubbard, blew a big
bank roll
Buying bones for her bare cupboard
At the story-book, fox-trot ball
That's all."*

And now Milburn saw her a figure of mediæval romance. Now, as he mused, she became gossamery, unattainable, among the clouds infinitely remote, infinitely desirable, with frail hands outstretched in vain to him with red, child-like, willing lips, and haggard eyes. This crowning romance of his life had evolved so matter-of-factly and yet with such amazing suddenness. He stirred in the sand and stretched himself lazily.

"And now git, monkeys! . . . but not till you've run to the other side of that boat, and told the man there it's very rude of him to pry and eavesdrop. Tell him I fine him two crisp new dollar bills. And you may have them and you may buy all the things mamzelle forbids. . . . Git!"

VI

ALMOST grudgingly she made room for him beside her, frowned at the eager questioning that lighted his face, toyed with a book that lay open on her lap. Milburn scowled. For the first time since he had met her, she provoked a sense of intense annoyance. It was humiliating always, at the crest of an arcadian mood, always when a happy hankering for a life with her seemed close to fulfilment, always to meet with studied withdrawals. His voice had the cold casualness of an insulted little boy when finally he spoke.

"Did you care for the books?"

And for all his chagrin he waited eagerly for her answer. He had loaned her "The Cream of the Jest" and Aikman's "Zell." He was fond of reading and, after all, if this elusive creature

was to become nothing more zestful than the spouse of his bosom, it would be ingratiating to discover a corresponding fondness in her.

After a long pause, Justine began to read.

"Empires were my playthings," came her sleepy purl, "but I had no son to inherit after me. I had no son—only that dead, horrible, mangled worm born dead that I remember seeing very long ago when the woman I loved lay dead. That would have been my son had the thing lived—a greater and a nobler king than I. But death willed otherwise; the life that moved in me was not to be perpetuated and so the heart in my body grew dry and little and shriveled like a parched pea."

The very soul of Milburn squirmed with his irritation. A delightful quotation, this, to blend with the heyday atmosphere of high noon, budding romance and an azure sky, its halcyon blitheness! But serenely Justine had taken up the other book, serenely she looked for a page, quite serenely she read on:

"He loved his son: that seemed the ultimate answer to all doubtings."

"The boy seemed now a very reincarnation of himself—of all his own hopes, desires, illusions, aspirations, potentialities. Avery Junior's every victory was a victory for his father: his every reverse a defeat. His son was the projection of all he himself was, all he might have been, all he had hoped to be. Through his boy, he might come to know the enchantment of a vicarious self-expression."

As she finished reading she interlaced her thin fingers with his. Sulkily he withdrew his hand. This constant puttering among subtleties and vague profundities was becoming unendurable. If the woman was unable to surrender herself to a holiday moment, if perpetually she must remain the prey of an unpleasant obsession—

"There's a fellow I know—name of Stacey Milburn." For an instant her cheek rested against his shoulder. "At

the moment he's grouchy or I'd say to him, 'Man of my life, do you mind much that I love you so foolishly, dear?'

Now, when again her hand sought his, he clasped it proprietorially. "Your hand, Justine, is rather unbeautiful. It's too thin, and too long, and the long fingers are slightly crooked, and the nails have a squat look. . . . Yours is a loveliness full of flaws—"

"Then kiss it."

And full in the face of a chance passerby her lips brushed his. Hardly had his irritation died down, though, when again she was in the midst of her accursed quotations, this time reciting from memory, her utterance slightly singsong and like that of a little girl saying a piece at school:

*"For he that visions God, of mankind
gathers
One man-like trait alone,
And reverently imputes to Him a
father's
Love for his son."*

She looked up at him eagerly.

"Well, Stacey Milburn?" and again after a full minute's silence, "Well?"

"Well, what?"

"Nothing, except . . . I am thinking of my husband, dear."

"And I don't want you to think of your husband. I want you to think of marrying me. I want to know that you'll marry me very soon, and that there's an uproariously Elysian honeymoon spree ahead."

Roughly he caught her to him.

"My husband"—Her lips had scarce left his when she began to speak, and her shoulders, within the span of his arm, to shake convulsively. "He was old, my husband, but he had young eyes. He had big, black eyes with a halloo in 'em. . . . Get what I mean? . . . He had the soul of a menial. . . . He made a superb figure on horseback. . . . And he was very aristocratic looking, with a long silver-gray goatee. From a distance his hair shone like a helmet. . . . I used to think he looked like a young crusader out on a lark . . . when he

was on horseback . . . and from a distance. . . . Can anyone have the soul of a menial who has a halloo in his eyes, and who makes a superb figure on horseback? He had."

She jumped to her feet and stood looking down into his face, fighting the tears.

"I think God was having one of his off days when he tackled my husband's soul. I think there was something brutal and sneery in the fashioning of it. . . . A poor parched soul, Stacey, full of queer, terrible urges, like every other soul, to be something kind of awfully grand for a minute or two. . . . He had his dreams, too, and they were the shabbiest tommyrot. . . . The *Rejuvenator* was the dream of his youth, and he fought for it just a little like a crusader for a Holy Grail,—and when he won out his youth was gone, and he went floundering around for another rejuvenator, and he wanted to perpetuate—"

She stopped short, outstretched her hands, two fragile, quivering entreaties. Milburn lowered his eyes. Even as he experienced a hurt resentment before that gesture of compassion which seemed somehow impersonal, somehow to place him, albeit very tenderly, side by side with her pathetic mountebank—even as he winced, he felt himself prone to a complacent basking before a whole-souled ardor all the more dithyrambic for its quality of shy, reticent wonderment.

"It's rotten taste mentioning it," he barely caught a whisper like the faintest of sighs—"but if it's any satisfaction to you—every time he'd even touch my hand I'd be yelling 'Lay off, lackey,' in my soul. And still when it came to a showdown I couldn't quit him."

A sob checked her. "I can't talk when you look grim. Won't you smile? W-won't—"

Aware that his supreme distaste for further reminiscence on the Throckmorton theme precluded so much as a responsive glance, he remained with

averted eyes. . . . After a moment, very slowly she walked away.

VII

SHE did not appear during the luncheon hour, but later, in his room, he found a scrawled and blotted letter.

"My awfully wonderful," it read, "you loaned me some books to test out my literary leanings. Now read, and learn what a spirit-blighting *precieuse* your woman can be when she's a mind to.

"Take the paternal instinct. Do you know all modern writers on a big scale,—virtually all the first-raters,—toy timidly with the theme? Now I will define the paternal instinct. Listen to my credo, most awfully dear.

"I believe that the paternal instinct awakens fully when all hopes begin to die. I believe that it grows stronger and stronger as a man's hair grows grayer and grayer. I believe that it's the great gray illusion that springs up when all the lovely, little rosy ones have fallen asleep. I believe that a big man begins to whimper then for someone to be the hero he once wanted to be, and a little man begins to demand, rather uneasily, and with a sort of lewd titter, someone to carry on the perfectly remarkable things he has commenced.

"I believe that once a woman has been loved very deeply, and no matter how inanely, I believe that she knows a good bit about men's souls in general. I believe that to be loved very deeply rather breaks a woman's heart in the long run, and it doesn't make the slightest difference that every hand-clasp from the man who loves her makes her say prayers that he'll stop his pawing.

"I believe that the deepest love of all, and the most terrible, has an almost senile tinge to it, that it's a sort of death-cry for romance when romance is already dead. I believe—and don't you?—that there's something rather horrible in a silly, slavish old man's hunger for a son as silly and slavish as he. Yes, and there's something beautiful in it, too, I believe, and very pitiful. And it's made me unfit for high romance, dear, and adventure, and mystery and honeymoon sprees. I'd be as ridiculous at that sort of thing as a palsied great-grandmother using her palsy to shimmy with on a ballroom floor. I'm thirty, but I have old, cried-out eyes.

"Care to take me on as a genteel matron, though conscientious homemaker, and rocker of cradles? That's the sort of thing you've been suggesting, but you want the rose and gold as well.

"At any rate, you've got to hear out the tale of my checkered career. That regatta thing is on for this afternoon. So there

won't be a soul in the pine grove. Want to meet me there, and do you promise not to scowl?

"Tell S. M. I love him.

"JUSTINE."

VIII

THEY knew where, in a tiny copse at the heart of the pine grove, a weather-stained hammock hung. There low-hanging branches all but screened them from chance intruders. There the afternoon sunlight seemed thick and aromatic, as if, as it soaked the scene, it were soaking itself in the clean, sharp fragrance of the pine. Through interlacing branches the September sky appeared to hang low, like a vast inverted cup that held these two secure in a lover's land of milk and honey, where only the piercing sweetness of a bird's song broke in upon them, epithalium-like, at intervals, and the hum of insects provided a sympathetic obbligato to their time-hallowed murmurings.

Milburn wanted none of the woman's puzzling subtleties and stilted credos. He sensed, in this retreat, in the quiver of the sunlight and stateliness of great, giant trees, a sort of playful holiness. It was as if the most austere among the high gods, bored with the vagaries of human destiny, might come here to grin and wink and wonder a little, stretch their august limbs, and listen, somewhat wistfully, to lovers' nonsense.

Justine wriggled her head into a comfortable place against his shoulder and sighed luxuriously, as if she had been waiting long for just such a shoulder and found it good.

"Man by the name of Milburn," she whispered, "Rather the grand sort of creature. Big, blazing blue eyes he has, and a faint smile which merely raises one corner of his mouth. His smile doesn't lack charm at all. Tell him I feel like a kiss."

"First the epic confession"—he tried to make his voice casual. "Let's get it over with."

"Right you are, and here goes." But an uneasiness stole into her voice. "You see, when I first met J. Morton—"

"Your eyes are lovely, Justine. Not at all beautiful. Your loveliness is all flaws. Your left ankle still slumps out a bit when you walk, and your nails are funny little squat things, and your throat is too long, and your hair is too short. The shadows under your eyes are pronounced today,—an exquisite mauve. And there are fine lines—"

"Spent, haggish eyes, darling,—all cried out. Do you mind much? And it's a worn hag at thirty who loves you . . . mind much? Now when I first met my husband—"

"Dear hag,"—he silenced her with a kiss—"your husband is a deadly bore. We'll forget him—"

"We'll never forget him." She sat up straight, clenched her hands, and began to speak in a world-weary, sleepy monotone:

"A tenth-rater, and a fake, . . . quite unquestionably . . . But enthusiasm, ardor, ecstasy,—completely carried away by life! One can't help respecting that sort of thing, no matter how ridiculous it is—now can one? Ask that man of penetrant insight, ask Stacey Milburn who turns his eyes away, and makes my heart feel damp and soggy, like a big, boiled oyster. . . . Can one, dear?"

For answer, sullenly he lit a cigarette. She sighed, leaned toward him.

"Give us a puff," she whispered, and went on:

"When—how shall I put it?—when he began to go in for patriotic splurges, and talking for the newspapers, the oldest and dreariest half-truths flashed upon him like so many soul-stirring revelations. You should have watched the glory sweep over his fine old face when one day he let me into the secret that all men are created free and equal. What a halloo in his eyes! . . . Soul of a menial, my poor darling had."

All at once her voice rang out, part of a shrill, frightened sobbing, and her thin hands made fluttering, clumsy passes in the air. "All he had made of himself, and all he'd failed in, all he longed to accomplish, all his big hopes and dreary despair—every bit of it

ridiculous and contemptible, and a little unpleasant,—and, great God, how pitiful! . . . And how much more pitiful to long to perpetuate such deadly tommyrot—to perpetuate it in a son, in his son. That's what he wanted above everything else. That's what he wanted of me."

Abruptly the sobs ceased, her hands fell heavily at her sides.

"Soul of a menial," very softly she droned, "with his everlasting pawing. . . . Give us a puff, dear."

Even while he surrendered to her harassed gentleness, Milburn let his fancy conjure an alien element in the hushed holiness of this sun-steeped spot. It was as if the very austere gods whose daily labors took them in routine fashion among the high pinnacles of human destiny, and who made this their playground, felt a tired business man's annoyance at their puppet's insistence upon shop talk, when this purpose was of a swift suppleness, and translucent whiteness, when they were interested solely in the fine, lithe curvings of her, in the clinging of full, red lips, and the lilt of love laughter. . . .

Again Justine found the comfortable spot at his shoulder, again sighed luxuriously.

"Your throat, Justine, it's too long and too thin."

"Kiss it, O man of all men," she crooned.

"Never thought I'd care for a woman with slanting eyes."

"Cried-out, haggish eyes. . . . Kiss 'em."

"When will you marry me, Justine?"

"Want a tired hag?"

"Want her a lot."

"Want her to sit in a corner, and tend babies? Want an estimable matron? Where's the glow?"

"Dear hag, I want to chance it."

"Remember, before anything else I'll always be J. Morton Throckmorton's widow."

With this, he stiffened, turned away. And after an instant, with one bound she was out of the hammock, facing him, her eyebrows twisted grotesquely,

a frail fist pounding a tree while she spoke, quickly, haphazardly, tumbling the words out pell-mell with every sharp-drawn breath.

"Let me tell you about J. Morton and his great love for me. He called me his gipsy, his wild gipsy girl, and he hadn't the tiniest dash of the gipsy in his get-up. I meant lawlessness to him, and he loved me, he who loved law and order, if only it was dull law and tiresome order. '*Vive la bagatelle!*' he used to shout as he lifted a cocktail glass. And he was strong for prohibition. Beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead while he swallowed his cocktail. And he'd read the books I liked, though he groaned while he read—he was red hot against immoral literature. And, oh, my dear—"

Big tears were rolling down her cheeks. "Oh, my dear, he used to tell me by the hour that Da Vinci was the fruit of a lawless love"—unwittingly she imitated a sort of pompous chant—"and Erasmus, too, and William the Conqueror, and Alexander Hamilton. He told me that to make me understand"—the elfin quality leapt into her eyes—"to make me understand that babies weren't necessarily an integral part of law and order, so wouldn't I please have a baby boy, and make believe he was without benefit of clergy, if I liked, because I was most desirable, and the king quack had a strange, terrible yearning to perpetuate himself, and his *Infalible Rejuvenator*."

Full-throated, the bird was trilling in the branches overhead, as if it mistook the sunset for dawn, and were tendering its blithe salute. From across the water came faint, far-away strains of music. And the late afternoon sunlight seemed to float about now in big, pine-scented mists of crimson and gold.

Enthralled at last by Justine's plight and twisted face, he listened avidly.

"It was lonely at that Brooks Farm affair way up in the mountains. It was just a rambling lot of log shacks, with very few servants. And I was very much alone. He came up only for the week-ends. He didn't quite realize that

they had already laughed him out of existence, and that his world had toppled over. But he'd come up to me each week with his face always a little grayer, and his collars always a little bigger for him—and the question always in his eyes. His face used always to fall when I hadn't the great news for him. . . . Give us a puff.

"At last one night—it was moonlight, Stacey. I watched a full moon rise over the mountains. And there was a sharp breeze and there was the smell of sleepy roses. . . . Yes, and there was the sound of water falling, too. . . . And across the lawn I saw him coming to me at last, with the great question in his eyes. . . . And Stacey,—Stacey, dear, hold my fingers tight while I tell you,—Stacey, I lied to him. I told him what he was waiting to hear,—God knows why I told him. Because the moon was so bright, and the roses so sweet, I suppose. I couldn't bear to see his shoulders sag, and his face go grayer. I gave him his great news, and without a word he walked into the house—with his head in the air. . . . Give us a drag."

A little gulp, a faint laugh, a gesture like a rending of a kindly veil before eyes that became big, glittering, sibylline, while for a full minute she stared blankly straight ahead.

"In a half-hour I followed him. Found him lying on a couch. No light but the moon. Book lying on his breast. . . . Open. . . . Cover up. . . . '*Ecce Homo*,' it read. . . . '*Behold the Man*.' . . . Wrote that on a cross once, didn't they? . . . High wind sweeping the curtains around . . . jiggling his goatee very foolishly from side to side. No sound, only the wind. Made the silence thicker. . . . His arms were stretched straight out on each side—like this—his head fell straight back, his feet stretched straight out. . . . He had a silly majesty. He looked like a caricature of a crucifix. He looked like a corpse. . . . Another drag, please."

She began slowly to sway then from side to side. And when he swept her into his arms frail hands tore at his

coat-sleeve, her face buried itself against his shoulder. Faint, obfuscated, her voice just reached him.

"He was . . . he was a corpse. . . . Quite dead, Stacey. . . . *Embo, ambo*, some kind of an *ism*. Clot of blood—travels slowly—to the brain or something—does its pretty work there. Perhaps you read what the doctors said. But to me that thing on the couch was saying, 'Behold the man! Hussey, behold your work!'—that funny thing with the jiggling goatee kept saying it. 'Every man his own crucifix,' it seemed to say, and a lot of other queer, disjointed things I couldn't get straight about his only begotten son or something. . . . I shouldn't have lied, should I? But he looked so—so all in, and the roses smelled so sweet, and of course I didn't really kill him—"

The same great sigh that topped her sobbing seemed to sweep the tenseness of her body into a tranquil majesty. She was even more appealing so, her lover reflected, of an infinitely poignant appeal with her gracious handclasp and her high-held head.

"Well, that's how he died, the quack who found me lovely and wanted me for the mother of his son. . . . And I loved him sort of, Stacey, even though every time he touched me I wanted to yell: 'Hands off, you menial with a menial's soul!' Stacey"—a new, rare tenderness stole into her whisper—"Stacey, my altogether wonderful, there are tears in your blazy blue eyes."

For a full minute she stood very still, wonderment and strange pride in him aglow on her face. Then she curled back into the hammock, nestled within the span of his arm. Again her head sought the comfortable spot at his shoulder.

"Do you see what a shabby plight it is? When you've been through a thing like that there's just the dregs of you left. You can't fit in with the lighter, and much more beautiful, and very, very much more significant things. Something has shrivelled—you've become half a worn-out drab, half a sex-hungry old maid. . . . I've told you all

this because I couldn't bear to have your nice foolish love dwindle away when I kept irritating you and failing you in little things. . . . And I shall irritate you often and—fail you, dear. . . . Still want me?"

He felt as if a supreme test of his calibre, which would decide once and for all what manner of creature this Milburn was, lay in a sovereign tribute he groped to word in answer.

"J—Justine," he stammered, with the blush aflame through his tan, "my little Justine of the high heart and the haggard eyes . . . if it's the dregs of you I'm to get, it's the dregs of you I'll glory in. And if our adventure together is leading to humdrumness, why, perhaps the prosaic conclusion will be the best part of it all. I'm a middle-aged romantic, Justine. I'll be making an imbecile of myself time and again, dear, leaving you by the hearthstone and strutting out in a silly search for tang and gusto. . . . And I think it will be quite wonderful, dear, I think it will top all the rather decent things life has offered—your forgiveness, my Justine. You'll become an expert at forgiveness before we're through. . . . So will you chance it?"

"I think," she whispered back, "that it will be altogether good fun. . . . And I hope I'll be able to—how shall I put it?—to effect the prosaic conclusion. I'll tackle the job with thoroughness and dispatch, I promise you. . . . I hope the prosaic conclusion will have blazy blue eyes like his papa's, and I am sure he'll be good company when I'm alone waiting for you to come home to be forgiven."

IX

HER kiss was very satisfying—the long, familiar clinging of warm, dewy lips with no hint of a pucker or a smack. And to the man who crushed her close, and felt the familiar thumping of her heart against his heart, it was as if the very austere gods were content now, as if they were holding their breaths for an instant before this nonsense, grin-

ning a blessing, providing in token of their sage approval a blood-red sunset and the bird that from a tree-top poured out its very soul in epithalamium salute. It was as if they found this very much more significant stuff than the heart of this Justine which, in a moment of folly, they had dedicated to the most tasteless of destinies—to the pampering of sick egos, and the gratification of faded hopes, and the perpetration of banalities.

For the first time in his life Milburn

realized himself completely in love; for the first time, too, he realized himself undeniably middle-aged . . . and a little ridiculous, perhaps, he and his hypothetical son . . . perhaps even a little at one with Justine's nostrum king himself. For the first time in his life, he experienced a complete, browsing contentment.

"I hope," she was whispering, "I hope the prosaic conclusion will stammer a little, like my man of all men—and blush very readily."



Secret

By Louise Driscoll

THERE is in my heart
A brook that runs
Catching at stars
And moons and suns.

Green like the leaves
That flutter and quiver
Where trees bend over
A little river,

With shady pools
Where whim and wish
Shimmer and dart
Like silver fish.

It's a secret place
That I may go
But no one else
Can ever know,

And there I wait
While dragon-flies bring
The dreams I dream
And the songs I sing.



The Virgin

By Solita Solano

I

BECAUSE she wanted to see how Arabella would take the marriage, Hetty arrived from Zanesville to pay her cousin a visit on the very day that Tom Shore brought his bride to the house across the road. Hetty came about two o'clock and was still upstairs unpacking when Arabella called, "Here they come, Hetty!"

When Hetty came to the window an automobile was standing across the road. A tall man who moved easily and, as if confident of his happiness, was lifting down a girl, lingering over her long after her feet had touched the ground.

"She don't look as if she had a grain of sense in her head!" cried Arabella.

Her nostrils became pinched as though they had breathed in winter instead of the glowing spring that was pushing past the curtains of starched scrim, and her eyes dilated like those of some predatory creature of the forest that sees a little animal at play before its hiding place.

"Her skirt's pretty short," said Hetty, clearing her throat.

"It's disgraceful!" exclaimed Arabella. "And just look at those high French heels!"

Both women stirred behind the curtains. They felt excitement—almost ardor.

"I can't make out Tom Shore's marrying an actress. He was always so steady." And Hetty cast a sidelong glance at her cousin.

"I think men have gone crazy. No wonder there are so many divorces," replied Arabella. "They brought quite a lot of things with them."

"I guess folks was surprised you and Tom didn't fix things up," ventured Hetty timidly. Since her arrival she had been impatient for an opportunity to say this. Still staring through the curtains, she felt Arabella's look of displeasure rest upon her profile.

"Tom and me?" Arabella's voice was shrill. "I guess you must be crazy, Hetty Stevens. I wouldn't marry the best man that ever stepped in shoe leather. I guess I know when I'm well off."

Hetty did not comment on this. To cover her nervousness she cleared her throat.

"Folks make me sick with their gossip," continued Arabella. "A person can't be neighborly with a man without everybody's thinking she's setting her cap for him."

Arabella turned to the window and her spare shoulders stiffened.

"My land, look!" she cried. Hetty had already seen when the girl's hat had slipped to the ground. "Her hair's cut short and bleached! I never saw anything so shameless in my life! Just wait till the church ladies see that!"

They continued to stare, concealed behind the prim curtains. Hetty stirred.

"He's real nice about carrying in the things," said Hetty presently. "See, Arabella, he won't let her lift a hand." A note of wistfulness colored her voice and was instantly detected by the alert Arabella.

"You just wait!" she snapped back. "What a man wants is a good housekeeper to make him comfortable. He'll get tired of half-cooked vittles and dust in the corners and a wife that's the laughing stock of the town with hair cut short and dyed! After he gets

through with this foolishness it will be different. He won't be waiting on her then, I can tell you!"

Hetty, her eyes fixed on the gay face opposite, knew that by "this foolishness" Arabella meant the honeymoon.

II

WHEN Hetty came downstairs the next morning Arabella had the table laid for breakfast by the window.

"Wasn't the table over there before?" inquired Hetty innocently as they sat down.

Arabella pretended not to hear.

"The cream seems to get thinner and thinner," she said, looking into the pitcher.

The women ate slowly. Arabella took bits of sausage on her fork, moved them about and left them isolated at the side of her plate. Then, as if it had just occurred to her, she looked out of the window.

"I guess the newlyweds aren't stirring yet." She spoke indifferently, but the pulse in her throat was beating like an imprisoned bird.

"Well, it's only seven o'clock," said Hetty.

She, too, looked at the house opposite, the windows with drawn shutters looking like eyes closed against the morning sun.

They carried the dishes into the kitchen and Hetty helped Arabella to wash and dry them. At ten o'clock they heard a "Hello" at the door. Arabella greeted Tom with cold eyes. Not at all embarrassed, he entered and shook hands with Hetty.

"Glad to see you, Miss Stevens," he said. "It's lucky for Ethel she'll have two women to keep her from being lonesome. How long are you going to stay, Miss Stevens?"

"I guess about the usual two months," replied Hetty, clearing her throat.

Tom drew nearer Arabella.

"Say, if you get a chance, run over and say 'Howdy' to the girl, will you?"

"I'll see, Tom," returned Arabella. "Today I was going to bake. I suppose

that—that your wife—is baking today, too?"

Tom laughed.

"I guess Eth don't know much yet about baking bread and pies," he said. "But she'll learn. Well, I'm off for the store. Good-bye."

Arabella watched him cross the road. He stopped under the bedroom window and called, "Ethel! Oh, Eth!"

"Seems in real good spirits, don't he?" remarked Hetty.

Arabella did not reply. She was watching the bedroom window.

The shutters opened and Ethel's bobbed head appeared, a splotch of yellow against the dark interior of the room. She was pulling a pink silk something about her shoulders and blinking in the sun.

"The ladies will be over to see you this afternoon," Tom shouted. "Don't you be lonesome, dear. Good-bye!"

Ethel yawned and stretched her arms. "G'bye," she said, and withdrew her head.

Arabella turned to Hetty. Her lips were white.

"Disgusting!" she stormed. "Think of that, Hetty! Still in bed at this hour and letting Tom get his own breakfast. She acts like—like a bad woman!" She choked and walked to the kitchen door.

"Go to see such a woman?" she cried. "Well, I guess not!"

Nevertheless about three o'clock she went upstairs, combed her hair and changed her dress. Hetty, in the next room, observed her through the half-closed door and waited with a sense of pleasant expectancy.

"We might as well sit in the yard a while," called Arabella. "It's real warm today. Just like June weather."

"I'll put on my blue alpaca," said Hetty. "It's been fixed over since you last saw it, Arabella. Mis' Hitchens put a black lace panel down the front and it looks real stylish."

They had been settled in their chairs scarcely five minutes when the door of the house across the road opened and Ethel appeared. Neither Hetty nor Arabella made a sign. Ethel hesitated

and then sat down on the steps and opened a book on her knees.

Presently Arabella said:

"I guess Tom would take it to heart if we didn't speak to her."

And Hetty, palpitating with suppressed curiosity, answered:

"I think it's our duty, Arabella."

They arose awkwardly and crossed the road.

Ethel saw them coming and closed her book. She stood on the lower step, her head tilted to one side and on her face a bright, fixed smile—the greeting of a city bride to the countrified friends of her husband's youth. She held out her hands with a gesture she had once seen made by the leading woman of a Western stock company playing her own version of "A Woman of No Importance." She made a charming picture in her dress of yellow silk. But Arabella and Hetty saw only the rouge on her lips and the bobbed hair.

"It's certainly nice of you ladies to take pity on a lonesome bride," she cried theatrically, and shook their hands. "Won't you step inside?"

"Pleased to meet you," murmured Hetty.

"We can't stay only a minute," said Arabella.

Ethel led them to the parlor, fluttering before them like a butterfly. As she followed, Arabella's eyes were everywhere, searching for changes that would stab her. In the hall she saw a sweater of green silk and the hat Ethel had worn the day before. The parlor, however, still maintained its air of rigid formality. The chairs were set in the same prim places they had occupied since Tom's mother died ten years ago. Ethel threw back the shutters and Arabella saw that a thin layer of dust was over everything. She drew down her lips and selected a chair, perching on its edge. Hetty cleared her throat and also sat down.

"Nice weather, ladies," began Ethel and chose the sofa. Tucking one foot under her bright skirts, she began to chatter about her old home in Chicago and her success in the vaudeville act

in which she had been playing when she met Tom.

"Everyone said if I had stuck in the profession I would have been a star some day," she finished.

Uncertain as she felt as to the approval of her visitors, she was at least sure of their interest. Both regarded her with the same expression they would have worn had they been observing the curious appearance of the bearded lady of Borneo.

"Most folks here never saw an actress," said Hetty as the pause threatened to become a silence.

"They've heard plenty about them, though," Arabella said.

Hetty looked startled and put in:

"Are you going to change the house much, er—Mis' Shore?"

The name stung Arabella to further indiscretion.

"I guess Mis' Shore, being an actress, won't bother much with housekeeping," she said, and looked meaningfully at the dusty table by her side.

"I'm going to learn," said Ethel, made suddenly timid by Arabella's ungracious attitude. "By the way, ladies, is there a decent movie theatre in this burg?"

Sunday morning the shutters of Ethel's room had not yet been opened when Arabella and Hetty left for church. Arabella was planning to delight the ears of Mrs. Stockbridge, the minister's wife, with a description of her call on the bride when she heard a stirring and whispering behind her. She looked around and saw Tom striding up the aisle with Ethel on his arm. The sermon had just begun. The minister faltered and lost the thread of his discourse as he joined his congregation in staring at the girl in filmy white whose cheeks were rouged and whose eyes were outlined with mascaro. Tom, gazing at Ethel with pride, guided her into the pew where his family had worshipped God for three generations. They sat down and by degrees the rustling throughout the church died away.

Presently Hetty stole a glance at

Arabella and saw a patch of mottled red burning on her cheek. The tip of her shoe beat a tattoo on the carpet. After the service she arose, gave Hetty a look of command and left the church without a word to anyone. On the way home she kept a step ahead of her cousin and the dull red in her cheeks had not faded away when they sat down to dinner.

The next day Arabella and Hetty did the regular Monday washing. Arabella could well have afforded to have in old Mrs. Briggs had she not considered such a makeshift to be a weakness not permitted by her sense of duty, which in Arabella's life took the place of love, maternity and friendship.

As the women threw the wet linen over the lines stretched across the yard, they clicked their tongues and shook their heads at the shutters of the house opposite, for these remained closed until nearly noon. Indeed, it was Thursday before the bride carried out into the sun garments of rose-colored silk which she spread on the grass. Their pink, small surfaces presently took Arabella across the road with the offer of a newly baked pie—in return for which she had an opportunity to walk close to the bits of silk and lace.

"Nothing but indecent dabs to cover her skin," she told Hetty later. "I wonder Tom hasn't packed up and left the house before this."

But Tom came home even earlier than usual that day, riding a new motorcycle with a basket attachment he had bought to please Ethel. Arabella heard her cries of delight and saw her climb in. She watched the white veil flutter around the bend in the road, and to her sad ears came the chugging of the engine. It could still be heard faintly as the minister and his wife, walking slowly, turned off the road and knocked at Tom's door. Arabella came out of her house and crossed over to intercept them.

"They just went away," she called.

Presently, standing by Mrs. Stockbridge's side, she gave a start and feigned surprise.

"I wonder what those pink things are?" she said.

Both women walked across the grass and stood looking down with eyes that condemned. The minister stood bewildered.

"What—what—" he began.

"Nothing we can tell you, Mr. Stockbridge," said Arabella with pursed lips. "I think Tom Shore must be blind, that's all."

The minister by means of an observation that was dull, but nevertheless of many years standing, knew at once what it was all about.

"She's a pretty little thing," he said in useless defense.

"Handsome is as handsome does," replied Arabella, stiffening. "Won't you folks come over and set for a spell?"

After they had gone Arabella and Hetty went down the road to Trainer's farm for vegetables. Nearing the farm, they came upon the motorcycle by the side of the road.

"Well!" said Arabella.

She stopped and peered beyond the shade of the willows. Among their branches she fancied she could see the gleam of a white veil by the water.

"My land!" exclaimed Hetty with a scandalized face. "Wouldn't you think they got enough billing and cooing at home?"

"It's enough to make a body's stomach turn over, I declare!" said Arabella.

Her face was drawn and the nostrils twitched. She stepped from the shadows and walked down the sun-flecked road. Hetty followed.

The last week of Hetty's visit, Tom Shore went away on a business trip for "the store." Ethel, with pale and discontented face, watched him from her window as he crossed the road to speak to Arabella and Hetty.

"I'll be gone four days," he told Arabella. "The little girl isn't feeling very well. Heat, I guess. Kind of look out for her, will you?"

He hesitated and began to blush.

"You know," he continued, "she's got an idea you ladies don't like her. I

tell her how you and me's been almost like brother and sister all our lives. She's nervous, I guess, in a strange place without her friends. I ought to take her with me, but I have to be jumping every minute I'm in Cleveland."

The first day of Tom's absence Ethel remained indoors. The second day she sat on the steps in the afternoon, a book on her knee, and moped.

"Shouldn't we go and talk to her?" asked Hetty. Arabella sniffed.

The morning of the third day Arabella listened in on the party line while Ethel telephoned to Chicago.

"Can you come down tonight, Fred?" Ethel's voice was thin and plaintive. "It's awful lonesome in this burg. Please come."

"I'd go anywhere to see you," replied the man. "You know that, Eth. I'm laying off three weeks rehearsing the act. Can't get a girl that suits since you left. Maybe I could coax you back, eh, girlie?"

"It's too late, I guess," said Ethel dully. "Well, I'll see you later, Fred."

"Bet your life. G'bye, sweetheart."

Arabella stood by the telephone a long time before she began to get dinner. That night after her cousin was asleep, she got out of bed and put on a black dress. She stole from the house and crossed the road like a shadow. The parlor window was dimly lighted and Arabella knew the small blue lamp was being used instead of old Mrs. Shore's reading light.

Scarcely breathing, she approached the window and came to rest like a bird of prey. The shade did not quite meet the bottom of the window and there was a quarter of an inch of unprotected glass. To this space Arabella applied an eye. Twenty minutes later she crept back to her room and laid on her pillows a face that was set like a mask.

Arabella was pale and silent at breakfast. Hetty was puzzled by the look of triumph that abided in the line of her cousin's eyelids and mouth. Arabella ate nothing but, in reply to Hetty's remonstrance, drank some coffee. Hetty complained of a backache and, after the

dishes were washed, went upstairs to lie down. Arabella took off her apron and walked across the road.

Ethel opened the door and tried to summon a smile. She had been crying.

"Good morning, Miss Arabella."

Ethel hesitated, rebuked by the grim face on her doorstep.

Arabella entered. Standing before the table with its piled up dishes of the meals of three days, the virgin confronted her victim.

"When does your husband get back?" she asked. Her eyes swept over the girl before her, noting the tousled hair, red-rimmed eyes and the spiritless air of Tom's wife.

"Tonight, I think. Why?"

"I have something very important to tell him," said Arabella. "He can't hear it any too soon."

Her tone was pitiless and through it rang the unmistakable note of victory.

Ethel heard it and the blood left her face.

She leaned against the kitchen table.

"What do you mean?" she whispered.

"No need to tell you. You haven't forgotten—last night—have you?" said Arabella.

Ethel's body grew limp.

"I'll be back when Tom comes," finished Arabella.

She turned to the door.

"Oh, no, no!" cried Ethel.

She sprang forward and threw herself at Arabella.

"Miss Arabella, you wouldn't do that—you wouldn't tell Tom?"

Arabella tried to draw herself from Ethel's touch.

"And why wouldn't I tell Tom?" she asked deliberately.

The girl's trembling mouth and dilated eyes gave her a sense of voluptuous power. "Isn't he my best friend, you—you *strumpet*?"

Ethel fell on her knees and clutched Arabella's skirt.

"I know he's too good for me," she said. "But he loves me—I love him. I was lonesome, Miss Arabella." She began to strangle with sobs. "I never was alone before in my life. Nobody came

near me. I didn't know when I asked Fred to come that he would—"

Arabella freed her skirt from Ethel's fingers.

"You explain this to Tom," she said.

"How could I?" sobbed Ethel. "I know what he'll do if you tell him. He'll send me away—"

"I hope so," said Arabella. "Women like you ought to be shot. You aren't fit for a good man like Tom to wipe his shoes on."

"—and I'm going to have a baby!" said Ethel. "You can't tell him now, Miss Arabella!" Her head sank to the floor.

"Of course I'll tell him. Probably the child is not his," said Arabella at the door. As she walked away she heard Ethel's moans, rising and falling.

III

ARABELLA, watching the road from the parlor window, saw Tom coming toward his house. It was long after supper and dusk was beginning to fall. He ran up the path, his eyes on the windows. He opened the door and shouted: "Ethel! Oh, Ethel!"

He waited a moment and then passed inside.

Hetty was still upstairs with her backache. Arabella continued to sit by the window. On her knees she held the family Bible, a book of monstrous size. Presently Tom emerged from his door and came across the road to the open window.

"Have you seen Ethel?" In the dimness his face looked puzzled and hurt.

"No," replied Arabella shortly.

"The house is dark. She's not there," said Tom. "I thought maybe she might be with you. I told her to take all her little worries to you for advice. It's a great thing for a girl to have an older woman to bring her troubles to, I always tell her."

"Let me give you your supper, Tom," said Arabella. "Maybe your wife's gadding in town at the moving pictures with some of her old friends."

She arose and her laugh was harsh.

"Hello," said Tom gently. "What's that?"

They looked down the road.

Through the deepening dusk two men were coming, walking as if with difficulty. Between them stretched an object, gray in the gloom.

Arabella and Tom stood motionless as the men approached. They heard them panting and murmuring. Then they halted before Tom's gate and one of them said, "I guess he ain't here."

Tom walked across the yard. Arabella left the house and followed him. As she came near she heard a voice saying, "We found her in the pond, Tom." Arabella felt her feet suddenly weighted to the ground. The four stood silent. There was no sound except a monotonous drip, drip, drip, on the gravel of the walk. Then the men carried the body into the house.

Ethel was laid on her rumpled bed and by the light of the lamp Arabella saw the pillow had been wet even before Ethel's drenched hair touched it. Tom fell on his knees and buried his face in the skirt of his dead wife's dress.

"Oh, Eth, why did you do it—why did you do it?" he repeated. He began to groan.

Arabella put her hand on his shoulder. He did not move, so she walked away and motioned the men from the room. As they tiptoed out, her eyes fell on a bit of folded paper lying on the bureau.

"A confession!" she thought with a thrill.

She picked it up and read "Tom" scrawled across the outside.

"Here's a note, Tom, dear," she said. "Read it. Perhaps it will tell you why she thought it best to leave you."

Tom did not turn his head.

Arabella opened the paper and read the first line. She quickly crushed it in her hand.

Tom lifted his face, wet and distorted, and looked at Arabella.

"A note, did you say?"

"No—it was a recipe for cake I

brought her yesterday," said Arabella.

Her eyes were blinking with fright as Tom's head dropped to the white skirt. She left the room quickly.

In her parlor, under the lamp, Arabella smoothed out the crushed paper and read:

"My Darling Husband—It's all Miss Arabella's fault. She's a cruel, terrible woman and now she can tell you how bad I am and how good she is. Remember I loved you, Tom, and I would have loved our baby. Good-bye. Eth."

Arabella heard Hetty coming down the stairs.

She reached over to the table and put the note in the Bible.

"Were you out?" asked Hetty. "I called and called."

"I was across the road at Tom's," said Arabella. "That actress wife of his drowned herself in Miller's pond an hour ago."

Hetty sat down. Her jaw dropped and her prominent eyes seemed to press against her spectacles.

"Land sake's alive!" she gasped. "What for?"

"Conscience," replied Arabella grimly, reaching for the Bible. "Well, the good book says, 'the wages of sin is death.' The Lord knows best, I guess."

She opened the heavy book on her knees. The look of triumph that Hetty had noted at breakfast was again stamped on eyelid and lip.



A WOMAN wonders whether she has been impressing a man with her cleverness; all the while he has been wondering whether she has pretty legs.



MAN'S brutality is the proof of his mastery, which women force him to display when they wish to weep.



A MARRIED man can easily put on his hat and go out. The hard part is coming back.



Nemaha, Nebraska, 1921

By Gretchen Lee

I

OLD BOB FELLERS

I'VE run the Presbyterian Sunday School for forty years. When they used to light the fire in the big sheet iron stove, I touched off the kindling. When the choir quarreled about what anthem they should sing at Peter Townsen's funeral, I interfered and made 'em give "Asleep in Jesus"—though Hanna Fliesch was mad for seven weeks. She can't sing alto to that tune to save her neck.

I've never changed my prayer; somehow I can't think that God would like to hear me do a new one. I'm saying the same one for little Carrie May Weeks that I said for her grandmother. I finish it as then, "Gather us, an unbroken band, for Jesus' sake, Amen."

And on a June morning when I see Carrie May with her black eyes snapping, I grow confused. Instead I pray toward the girl that her grandma used to be when I first made that prayer.

I remember how she looked on the day she decided to marry Peter Ringler and how I hoped God would strike him dead before the ceremony. And how she trembled on the snowy afternoon we buried him. And how I hoped—but no, she wouldn't take me even then.

And when I say to God, "Gather us, an unbroken band," I do not mean it. Dear God, do not let Peter Ringler be there when we gather.

II

MEEDIE JANAUK

I AIN'T old—I'm only fifty-two. Say, I can walk to town with butter'n eggs after I've done a week's bakin' an' swept the cave and put the cheese in moulds for

Saturday. An' I'll get back to home by milkin' time.

I ain't purty—my front teeth got lost the day Paw struck me with the whiffletree. I ducked to fool him and I hit me on the fence. But I've walked out with Henry Sidders and I've had a child as beautiful as gentians in the shade.

I ain't smart—they've always told me so. But I can count the change that Freddie Harper makes me at the store. And when the calico's five and seven-eighths cents a yard, I know the answer when I buy a dress for Jane.

I ain't no 'count—I've heard it fifty years. But when I see my little girl in her blue dress ready to go to town—I can't swallow for the beauty of her.

If I can only keep her—young an' smart an' pretty—away from all those lazy louts who look at her and grin, that'll be enough for me.

III

HEN SZINCK

I'M the oldest man in Otoe County, and they's many a citizen who begrudges me my title. For I'm the child of Demon Rum and by all rights I should a' been mowed down in my infancy. I shouldn't have a friend and should be walkin' toward the poor house all alone, today.

But I ain't. I've got seven hundred acres of Nebraska land and last year when all my virtuous neighbours bought motor stocks and talked about the way to beat the income tax, I just kept plantin' corn. And I'm damn glad I done it.

Every kid in town knows who I am and yells to me as I go drivin' by. "Hullo, Hen," they holler, "how'za boy?"

You know, I went to sea long years

ago, and I can tell these land hawks lots o' lies about when I was what they call "before the mast."

An' being as I come from ferrin parts, and wear my earrings still when I'm in town, I'm still to them a ferrin man. I ain't Ole Hen who makes 'em do their lessons and go join the church. I'm a sea dawg who can tell 'em about flyin' fish and places that their joggerfies paint blue an' yella on maps.

So, if I've drunk a little on the side—say just enough to float a schooner—I've still got friends, an' home, an' I'm the oldest man for twenty miles around.

IV

TILLIE TAYLOR

How times do change. I'm working here for Nelia Diehl. I who once thought I'd now be strumming harps. And when the house is cleaned and I've brought in the wood, I weave a carpet on their wooden, handmade loom.

How it irks me—just to think. I used to lie for days on Sister Anna's best bed, lingering between life and death. And Doctor Meyers would come and sit for hours and give me medicine. I've had night watchers. How they'd come and look at me slipped down between the sheets! And callers came to bring me jelly and beef soup and members of the U. B. church left cards with verses on them about Death.

Then I would rally, to amaze the town, then relapse and draw my illness out to seven months, while sisters watched and brothers prayed and Dr. Meyers came calling every day. Those times are gone. My brothers are asleep—my sisters gone to watch through starrier nights than ours. And Doctor Meyers himself took too much coke. But I live on—a menial for Nelia Diehl.

How I do hate that woman, and how times do change.

V

DOC BARNES

I'M Doc Barnes, they christened me Derastus but it wouldn't stick. They like to say that on the day I last did any work the sun stood still. Well—maybe

I can't boast of all the industry which made Jim Taylor famed—but I can tell a joke to make you slap your thighs.

I've squandered every cent I had on games of chance, on loans which never will come due and little dabs of stock which never seem to pan.

But when they're going 'round with a paper to get names to settle Widow Wilgus' coal bill, I can always find a little to chip in. And when they want to take Mag Lillie's girl to the hospital to set her broken hip—why I can pay her fare and drive her to the station in my rig.

And when Old Lem Tilden died and left every cent he owned to the State Humane Society, the whole town was staggered to find I was witness to his will.

VI

TERESE EGGLESTON

WHEN I step from my motor and skip up the pretty walk that leads to our house every woman in Nemaha wishes she were I. They wish they could run as I do and not wobble. They wish their shoes laced close together as mine do. They wish they had my name, on calling cards, and better still on check books.

When they gather in the afternoon to sew and plan the winter's club routine they always end in talking about me.

"How did she land Jack Eggleston?" asks Bessie Tout, who now is thirty and weighs two hundred pounds.

"How can a man from Yale enjoy her chatter?" sighs Amy Rohl who went two years to Wesleyan and loved it.

"She had no money, so I've heard," clacks Ellen Bratt whose father left her miles of Kansas land.

Ah! Don't they wish they knew that once I stood on a runway built by Lee and Jake and tinkled a tiny bell near the ears of the young men from Yale!

Wouldn't they love to hear what I wore when I used to lisp, "Daddy, Let Me Nestle in Your Arms"?

How they would envy if they knew how snug my scapulæ fit my ribs, which comes from shaking a swift shimmy!

How every woman in Nemaha wishes that she were I.

Legal and Sufficient

By Maurice Lazar

I

IF Lawyer Plaisted was bored by her spoofing he gave no sign that he was. Simply grinning when Mrs. Purcell begged him not to be cruel to her, he remained impersonally courteous, and as occasion required, deferential.

Mrs. Purcell's lively, sparkling-ringed fingers curved together like a little scoop and mechanically closed and opened during her remarks. A feeling of anxiety, which she tried to conceal under a simulated gayety of manner, did not escape the lawyer's attention. At the same time he found it pleasant to look at her in her rose-colored chiffon house-dress and admire the attractive *ensemble* of blonde hair, serious blue eyes and large mouth made symmetrical by clever application of rouge. He noted her rounded arms and strong-looking fingers. Nor did he fail to observe that her soft, drawling voice—agreeable to hear—contrasted charmingly with the shrewd alertness of her mind.

"I don't want to go to court if I can help myself," she was saying again. "I'm as eager as Mr. Forster to avoid the publicity. But he has certain obligations which he will have to meet."

"Mr. Forster is determined to settle," said Plaisted. "That's just what I'm here for, you know."

"Well, suppose he offered a certain amount of money—I'm only supposing such a thing, remember—what would I be able to do then? I don't want to be vulgar about it, but I must again call your attention to the fact that I lost a

comfortable home, sympathetic husband, friends and pleasant social activities. I had to lose all that to be free to enjoy Mr. Forster's companionship. I really had to. And now I feel that I shouldn't be left in a hopeless position, socially. You see what I'm driving at? A cash settlement wouldn't exactly—" And she stared with naïve earnestness at him.

"Yes, but a cheque would be the only possible way to settle your claims and stop the matter from going any further. The obligations that my client may have incurred do not include an interest in your permanent well-being. As I understand it, he owes you only so much as you and he may agree upon in a definite figure. You are able to hurt my client socially, and perhaps financially. I am here to buy this power from you. With all due regard for your personality, I suggest that you tell me what sum you think is due you."

She did not say a word.

Plaisted was not without sentiment. He had called expecting to find Mrs. Purcell theatrical and had been pleasantly surprised. She was not only practical but well-mannered; not only well-mannered, but refined. She had personality.

Quick to appreciate her attitude toward Forster and also her native hard-headed capability, Plaisted did not try to hurry her on to some sort of settlement. Having suggested an immediate way out, he was determined to let her have plenty of time in which to decide. Careful not to seem rude he arose and moved about the living-room of her apartment. He paced the rich-looking rug—one of Forster's costly

gifts—and simulated complete immersion in deep pools of thought.

She stared at him.

"I'll bet she's thinking how far she can go with me," he reflected, calmly aware of her scrutiny.

But she wasn't. He was a personable young man, about thirty-six or seven, tall, slender, well-groomed. There wasn't a mark of worry on his face, and his smile was spontaneous, not forced. She noted how his fingers played abstractedly with his moustache and what she thought could never have been known by her remark, which was preceded by a sigh:

"Well, I really don't know what to ask for."

Plaisted, turning to stare at her, said slowly and carefully:

"Mrs. Purcell, it's an old joke and a poor one, that distinguishes lawyers from men of honor. Like most men of my profession, I am really both. I can, for example, conscientiously serve Mr. Forster, my client, and also help you. In fact, he wants me to be of every possible assistance to you. He feels that your interest in him has been a fine thing in his life. A real influence. . . And he is as appreciative as he is discriminating."

He glanced at her in time to see her turn away. Imperturbably he went on:

"At the same time, he thinks that any arrangement we do come to should be an equitable one: as fair to you as it would have to be to him. Such an arrangement would naturally rest on the fact that both parties voluntarily maintained a certain understanding for two years. I repeat, voluntarily! And I know you and I would agree that in those two years Mr. Forster was extremely liberal, and personally considerate."

Again Plaisted glanced at her. He was in time to see her avert her face again. Wondering vaguely whether she was trying to conceal the faintest possible smile, he concluded:

"However, Mr. Forster wishes you to retain a friendly opinion of him—please don't laugh, he really means that

—and so he has authorized me to offer you fifty thousand dollars in full settlement of all claims against him. The money will be paid you when you sign a certain paper I have prepared."

Mrs. Purcell was suddenly greatly provoked. There could be no doubt of that as she drew herself up to her full height and hollowed her back a little, perhaps the better to express her disdain.

"Let us discuss the fine arts, Mr. Lawyer. Do you like . . . *verse libre*?"

"Well, not too *libre*," he replied softly, unable to suppress his smile.

"Or, we might discuss the actual, not potential, value of effective soothers of tired gentlemen. Gentlemen who are aged, humorless, heavy-footed, asthmatic and fat; whose manners wait outside for them with their chauffeurs, when they call. Or, referring specifically to one gentleman I know, whose perfume is as pungent as whiskey, and not discreet, like that of a discreet lady."

An ironical twitching of her lips accompanied the broadly drawled tones:

"I hope you won't think I'm unreasonable, Mr. Plaisted, but I feel that a lady's—a discreet lady's—time is worth at least as much as an indiscreet gentleman's, and that fifty thousand dollars will never, never do. Never! . . . Will you call on me again in a day or two? In the meantime you may succeed in stretching your client's liberality without straining his heart. If you do, I won't have to show a leering world his very, very warm letters."

She rang for the maid.

Mr. Plaisted took his hat and stick and bowed gravely as the door was opened for him.

II

PLAISTED told John Forster of his visit, that evening. He omitted no details, slurred over and emphasized nothing, in his recital. Finished, he toyed with a cigar and became abstracted. The two men had been dining at

their club. An air of seriousness marked their conversation.

Forster, a stout man of fifty-five, gray-haired and superficially well-preserved, was precise in his speech. He had attended his lawyer's story with an expression of worry. When he spoke he seemed to make no effort to conceal his apprehension. His voice, ordinarily high-pitched and thin, sounded unusually strained:

"Plaisted, you're doing well so far as you've gone. But you've got to do better and go farther. You've got to settle this immediately. You know what a fix I'm in. My wife hasn't questioned my comings and goings, and I must do nothing to embarrass her, as well as myself. Now the lady you called on this morning is really very charming; a fine-grained person. Classy! But she's also a sleeping tigress. She has claws. And she won't let anything interfere with her use of them. You see, I know her very well. So if you can talk her into accepting money, go to it! She suggested that you call again?"

Plaisted nodded slowly.

"Suppose you call on her again. Be very nice to her. Offer her more money. Try her with seventy-five thousand dollars. Eighty, if necessary. And try to flatter her sense of refinement. She takes much pride in good manners, and nice clothes, and lots of polite attention. I have often heard her declaim on the significance of appearances, of what she considers good breeding. Cater to this prejudice of hers.

"Approach her in a more personal way this time. You're young, prepossessing, and all that. Appeal to her romantic notions. Talk about literature and music. She likes that sort of thing. Gradually you may make her receptive to suggestions. Then you can indicate, gently, that she isn't doing the right, the moral thing. You can even suggest that she return to her husband, or else occupy herself with some honorable everyday work. Don't snicker, man, I'm earnest about this. Of course I know that her husband won't have her back under any consideration. He's

through with her for good. But that should make no difference to us. See what I mean?"

Plaisted nodded again, slowly. He was content to let his client do all the talking. He felt bored.

"Maybe you can get her to feel ashamed of the situation. You mustn't forget she comes of a nice family."

Plaisted's smile irritated Forster.

"Well, and why not?" he exclaimed. "It may do us some good to try her on the moral side of this thing! She really has a strong religious streak in her. If you can get her to see that her conduct is—"

"Yes, but she intimated that your conduct has also been socially remiss, when I talked with her this morning," said Plaisted. "You shouldn't overlook the facts in the case. She has your letters—warm letters, she calls them—and she certainly means to use them to her advantage. Now fourteen letters in court will—"

"Fourteen! Impossible!" Forster's consternation was genuine. "I am sure there are no more than eight or nine. I wrote all of them to her on different trips out of town. Business trips."

Plaisted couldn't help smiling as he went on:

"Whether she has eight or fourteen doesn't matter. The fact is she has your letters. We must buy them. Appealing to her sense of moral rectitude may or may not do us some good. It won't hurt to try, but it must remain incidental to the fact that we must buy some letters from her."

Forster nodded. He forgot his irritation with Plaisted's calm dismissal of his suggestions as he discussed a number of business matters. But before long he reverted to Mrs. Purcell. He touched on the romance of their relationship. Her æsthetic interests, her sympathy for him, the generous regard which she had manifested even long before he began to shower gifts upon her—these things he spoke of with much warmth.

Forster seemed eager to fix the lawyer's attention on the inevitable circum-

stances that had forced him to attach himself intimately to Mrs. Purcell. He termed them a "powerful combination of elements." Her personal charm, social isolation, his lonely career of successful absorption in business, her ready ear for his little worries and grievances, her dainty physical expressions—these things, too, he hinted at, crudely, but with real sentiment. Presently, with head bent forward, Forster said:

"So Mrs. Purcell thinks I've also been remiss, socially? Well, tell me, frankly now, as man to man, forgetting you're my lawyer, and I your client, what do you think of my conduct in this affair?"

"I don't care to discuss it. I have no opinion to offer."

Forster became insistent.

Plaisted merely shrugged his shoulders. But he had to express himself on the subject, for he could not evade his client's wishes.

"If you're so sure that you want my opinion, and won't mind, I'll tell you: I think that any man who associates with what we may call a 'professional woman' is an ass and worse. Usually he likes such a woman because she's expert in twisting him round her littlest finger; because he's an ass, in short. And if he seeks her out because he frankly prefers her companionship, he's worse. In my opinion, remember!"

Forster didn't like that at all. He couldn't help pounding the table between exclamatory utterances:

"You're all wrong, man, all wrong. Maybe I am an ass. But then, so are you. For all I know we're all asses, and if we are it doesn't matter much. We're simply built that way and that's the way we're built."

Plaisted lifted his hands in protest:

"There's no sense in arguing the point. You wanted to know what I think and I've told you. I've given you my opinion. I don't think we're all built that way. But never mind what I think. My opinion has nothing to do with the matter at hand. I'm here to take care

of your legal needs and I shouldn't be asked to obtrude my private opinions on your conception of morals."

Forster unreasoningly glared for a moment, then nervously lit a cigar. Between incipient puffs he said:

"You know something of law, all right, but not a damn thing about women. Believe me, boy!"

III

No, she was sorry, but she would not be able to see him in the course of the day: there was so much to be done about the house, etc. But in the evening, she would be very glad if it would be just as convenient . . . ?

Plaisted took note of her amiability, thanked her, and hung up the telephone receiver. He wondered whether the reference to her housework was intended for an effect on him.

When he presented himself at Mrs. Purcell's apartment that evening he was admitted by her maid, an ancient, dignified negress, at least six feet high.

In the living-room, Mrs. Purcell advanced to greet him, hand outstretched, face bright with a smile of welcome. She looked charming in a shadowy musk-colored gown with jade ornaments. She spoke pensively and Plaisted immediately put himself on guard.

"I hope you aren't inconvenienced very much, Mr. Plaisted," she said, while the maid marched away with his hat, "I certainly appreciate your willingness to—"

"Not at all, Mrs. Purcell." Plaisted was stiffly formal. "I'm never inconvenienced by my business obligations."

She smiled—a quick faint smile—at the word "business" and perhaps recollected herself for the pensive expression reappeared and her eyes glowed fairly. She moved with impressive slowness to a chair, motioned the lawyer to another, and settled herself, much after the fashion of an auditor expecting subtle entertainment.

Plaisted observed that she filled her chair without looking big in the hips, that she had rested her arms full length

on the chair's arms, and that she was calm about the interest she was provoking. He remembered that he was here on a matter that required his most tactful conduct, and without further formality he asked whether she had decided what she really wanted in full settlement of her claims.

"Well, first let's have a drink." She called aloud for her maid.

"Two cocktails, Finestra, please, and water mine.—Finestra knows how to prepare a cocktail," she added, turning to Plaisted. "Mr. Forster taught her."

"He did?"

"Yes, indeed. He wanted to show me how, in fact, he did show me, but I never could learn, or else I forgot. Anyway, Finestra does it for me." And she smiled broadly.

"Finestra is such an odd name."

"Isn't it? As odd as she is, old darling. She is such a dear! One of the family heirlooms. Been with me many years. With my father and mother before that. With my grandfather till he died. She looks after me, you know. Old faithful mammy stuff, you get me? She takes a sort of maternal interest in my welfare."

"Must be nice to have her about," said Plaisted, who really wasn't a bit interested. "How old is she, anyway?"

"Finestra's sixty-two; has one or two poor old teeth left and holds her head so far back so's to be able to keep her eyes open."

Mrs. Purcell was encouraged by Plaisted's chuckle to tell some more about Finestra. And she told how, in the days she was with her husband, Finestra would become angry whenever admirers having telephoned and found her mistress out, gave fictitious names. "Lady, lady," Finestra would growl, "you tell these here beaux o' yours to leave their real ol' right names or I'se goin' forget they's ever lived! Who's they 'fraid of? Your husban'?"

Mrs. Purcell soon lost herself in her reminiscences. Her interest in her own stories increased. Color crept into her face. Her voice, pitched perfectly for the room as a result of assiduous

practice, had very pleasing inflections.

Plaisted gradually entered into the spirit of intimacy and confidence which she brought, unconsciously, into the conversation. He couldn't help admiring, as he had on his first visit, her quick wit, her frank guilefulness, her deeply human laugh. Too bad she has to commercialize herself, he thought. She couldn't possibly have cared for Old Soak Forster. Still! . . . No doubt she needed the money.

Finestra paraded into the room with the cocktails, served them, and paraded out.

Presently Mrs. Purcell told the lawyer, quietly, and with some touches of humor, of her girlhood's musical ambitions; of friends who had achieved more or less distinction; of her marriage to old Purcell, retired business man—a fossil—whose slippers always wore out quicker than his street-shoes and who soon drove her nerves on edge. She spoke of the men, a number of them, who came to flirt with her, "took her out," and gave her "good times." Plaisted almost sympathized when she alluded to her search for relief from the monotonous respectability of her spouse and his dispiriting environment. Everything she said she said politely and to everything Plaisted listened with appreciation. He smiled kindly when she told him she used to be away from her house all day and return to spend the evening with "her old man," in time to begin her "day's work."

One of her stories that amused Plaisted very much was about Finestra. Back home after a month's absence in the East, Mrs. Purcell discovered that Finestra had pasted on the kitchen-walls carefully clipped newspaper "stories" of the divorces that had transpired, as they say, in her absence. Ostensibly the clippings were for Finestra's own entertainment. But Mrs. Purcell knew better. She was familiar with the servant's characteristics and for a time heeded the whimsical caution. But only for a time. The Purcells' quarrels increased, and when Forster came, culminated in a divorce.

Mrs. Purcell suddenly crossed the floor. This time she pressed the button and Finestra solemnly paraded into the room.

"Cocktails, please. Water mine again." Finestra paraded out.

Plaisted watched his hostess as she bent over a vaseful of jonquils on the table. He was startled when she suddenly turned and, eyeing him searchingly, said:

"Long ago, Mr. Forster asked me what I would do, all, all alone in a mockingly indifferent world. I told him that a good man would come along. A good man who would be a good friend. And he asked how I would know when he came. And I told him that he would send me a bouquet of jonquils, to let me know so I could do my hair over and

powder my nose. . . . And next day I received a big bouquet of jonquils. They were beautiful things. . . . But you're waiting for me to say what I ought to get. You want me to name my salary. . . ."

IV

PLAISTED was at his office unusually early next morning. He took from his coatpocket a packet of letters and placed them all in one large envelope on which he wrote the name of John Forster. He then placed the envelope in his desk, locked it, and left the office.

Across the street was a florist's.

Plaisted selected a big bouquet of jonquils. He ordered them sent, with his card, to Mrs. Purcell. . . .



WHEN a man is in love, you can tell by his silence. When a woman is in love, you can tell by her talk.



THE honeymoon is definitely over when the bride tries to find out the cost of the engagement ring.



MARRIAGE: Love that could not take a joke.



ALL necks look alike to the hangman.



Le Rat d'Hotel

By Charles Dorneir

AU seuil de sa confortable villa, avenue Gambetta, à Bois-Colombes, Joseph Benoit alluma son cigare. Associé d'un commissionnaire aux Halles, il était obligé de partir ainsi, trois fois la semaine, à Paris, jusqu'au lendemain matin. Sa femme et sa fillette, qu'il venait d'embrasser longuement, de la fenêtre lui faisaient signe.

C'était un honnête bourgeois, au visage placide, dont les quarante-cinq ans bedonnaient à peine. Lui aussi, retourné fréquemment, d'un geste affectueux, répondait à l'adieu des deux femmes, mais en même temps, ses yeux aigus, avec une vivacité inquiète, scrutaient au loin les deux rangées d'arbres de l'avenue. Rassuré, il salua d'un bonjour cordial l'unique passant, M. Paul Trévant, le voyageur de commerce, son voisin, qui allait faire sa partie de manille au café de Flore.

Hâtivement il gagna la gare, où il arriva juste au passage du train. Il choisit un compartiment vide, et, avant de refermer la portière, il observait attentivement la montée des autres voyageurs. Bien qu'il eût pris son billet pour Saint-Lazare, il quitta le train à Courcelles, et, comme s'il cherchait à dépister quelqu'un, le pas rapide, l'œil toujours aux aguets, il sauta dans un autobus Champerret-Médicis, descendit à la Concorde, et, se faufilant avec une adresse extraordinaire au plus épais des voitures, il s'engouffra dans le Métro. Alors commença un voyage plus bizarre encore. Changeant six fois de ligne, de l'Etoile, par Villiers, l'Opéra, le Nord, Barbès et Pigalle, il débarqua à Caumartin, à deux pas de cette gare Saint-Lazare autour de laquelle, en cette course étrange de lièvre fuyant on ne

sait quel chasseur, il avait tourné trois fois. Dans la cohue de la sortie, d'un geste prompt, il s'affubla de lunettes noires, puis, sûr d'avoir bien brouillé les voies, traversant la chaussée, il entra dans une des premières maisons de la rue.

Salué au passage d'un sourire animable de la concierge, locataire familier, il gravit l'escalier, tira une clef, et s'introduisit à l'entresol.

Au bout d'un quart d'heure, il en ressortait coiffé d'une casquette, le visage presque enfoui dans le col d'un long manteau à carreaux et, filant vers Saint-Lazare, il alla retirer à la consigne un luxueux sac de cuir et une riche couverture de voyage—et, quelques instants après, lorsqu'il se présenta, le manteau sur le bras, au bureau du grand hôtel de Spa, due d'Amsterdam, nul n'eût reconnu dans ce vieux gentleman à barbe blanche, en costume de drap anglais, dernière mode, qu'on inscrivait sous le nom de sir John Werner, M. Joseph Benoit, bon bourgeois de Bois-Colombes.

* * *

Deux heures du matin. Dans la chambre de sir Werner, M. Benoit, pour la troisième fois, à la lueur d'une minuscule lanterne, change de costume. Il apparaît en souple maillot noir. Un loup couvre son visage. Du sac luxueux il tire une pince délicate comme un instrument de chirurgie, et, chaussé d'escarpins de caoutchouc, il ouvre sans bruit sa porte, et glisse et se fond dans la nuit du couloir.

Devant une chambre du fond il s'arrête et frappe deux coups. L'oreille à la serrure, il écoute une, deux minutes. Il frappe de nouveau, écoute encore. Alors délibérément il introduit sa pince,

tourne la clef intérieure, et entre, toujours invisible.

Il fait jouer sa lanterne électrique. Elle éclaire sur les draps la tête pâle d'un voyageur, et, sur une chaise, des vêtements. Eteignant sa lanterne, il sort des poches un portefeuille, une bourse, un chronomètre, et, lesté de ce premier butin, après avoir refermé à clef la porte inconnue, il rentre silencieux chez lui.

Bientôt il fait une nouvelle sortie. Il se dirige cette fois au bout opposé du couloir. Avec les mêmes précautions habiles, il s'introduit dans une chambre, sûr de lui, car depuis vingt ans, celui qui pour tous, même pour sa femme, pour sa fille, est un honnête homme, fait se métier de voleur, ayant mis sur les dents les plus fins limiers de police, et déroulé le flair infailible jusque-là du fameux Phocas.

Il presse de nouveau sur le bouton de sa lampe—mais, lui, dans les situations les plus critiques, toujours si maître de son sangfroid, pousse soudain un cri stupide, car au brusque jet de lumière, dans de lit, il a aperçu un dos d'homme, un visage de femme, la sienne. . .

Mme. Benoît, car c'est bien elle, ouvre des yeux d'effroi, et à la vue de ce fantôme noir qui, trop tard, songe à éteindre sa lampe, et s'élance d'un bond, dans le couloir, elle clame dans la nuit, affolée: "Au voleur! Au voleur!"

* * *

De toutes les chambres, réveillés en sursaut, des hommes, des femmes, à peine vêtus, se précipitent, et, comme

les voisins ont entendu la rentrée galo-pante de l'homme, et comme seule d'ailleurs la porte de sir Werner reste close, les soupçons s'accordent aussitôt sur lui, et tous se ruent vers la chambre. On appelle, on frappe, mais comme il ne fait pas mine d'ouvrir, on enfonce la porte. Il ne saurait nier. Sans fausse barbe, avec son maillot qu'il n'a pas eu le temps d'enlever, le portefeuille, le chronomètre de son premier vol laissés sur la table de nuit, tout l'accuse. On le saisit, on lui arrache son masque.

Alors unie voix de femme, douloureuse, étranglée, râle:

—Toi! Joseph! un voleur! Oh!

Benoît, à ce cri de son épouse, tourne la tête, la voit tomber dans les bras d'un homme, son amant qu'il n'a pu reconnaître tout à l'heure, et reste un instant interloqué de découvrir dans ce complice du fatal adultère, Paul Tiévant, le joueur paisible de manilles, le commis-voyageur de l'avenue Gambetta, à Bois-Colombes. Et soudain, furieux, il injurie sa femme et l'amant:

—Crapules! c'est donc vous deux qui m'avez fait pincer, qui me trahissez doublement! J'aurai ta peau, sais-tu coquin!

Mais l'autre met le comble à sa rage, par ces mots de joie insolente:

—Oui, c'est moi, Paul Tiévant, ou plutôt le brigadier Phocas, qui te cherche depuis dix ans. Vrai! elle est rien farce! Je ne me doutais pas que depuis si longtemps nous étions voisins, et que, pour te prendre, il fallait te prendre d'abord ta femme!



Drama As An Art

By George Jean Nathan

IF the best of criticism, in the familiar description of Anatole France, lies in the adventure of a soul among masterpieces, the best of drama may perhaps be described as the adventure of a masterpiece among souls. Drama is fine or impoverished in the degree that it evokes from such souls a fitting and noble reaction.

Drama is, in essence, a democratic art in constant brave conflict with aristocracy of intelligence, soul and emotion. When drama triumphs, a masterpiece like "Hamlet" comes to life. When the conflict ends in a draw, a drama half-way between greatness and littleness is the result—a drama, say, such as "El Gran Galeoto." When the struggle ends in defeat, the result is a "Way Down East" or a "Lightnin'." This, obviously, is not to say that great drama may not be popular drama, nor popular drama great drama, for I speak of drama here not as this play or that, but as a specific art. And it is as a specific art that it finds its test and trial, not in its own intrinsically democratic soul, but in the extrinsic aristocratic soul that is taste, and connoisseurship, and final judgment. Drama that has come to be at once great and popular has ever first been given the imprimatur, not of democratic souls, but of aristocratic. Shakespeare and Molière triumphed over aristocracy of intelligence, soul and emotion before that triumph was presently carried on into the domain of inferior intelligence, soul and emotion. In our own day, the drama of Hauptmann, Shaw and the American O'Neill has come into its popular own only after it first achieved the imprimatur of what we may term

the unpopular, or undemocratic, theaters. Aristocracy cleared the democratic path for Ibsen, as it cleared it, in so far as possible, for Rostand and Hugo von Hofmannsthal.

Great drama is the rainbow born when the sun of reflection and understanding smiles anew upon an intelligence and emotion which that drama has respectively shot with gleams of brilliant lightning and drenched with the rain of brilliant tears. Great drama, like great men and great women, is always just a little sad. Only idiots may be completely happy. Reflection, sympathy, wisdom, gallant gentleness, experience—the chords upon which great drama is played—these are wistful chords. The commonplace urge that drama, to be truly great, must uplift is, in the sense that the word uplift is used, childish. The mission of great drama is not to make numskulls glad that they are alive, but to make them speculate why they are permitted to be alive at all. And since this is the mission of great drama—if its mission may, indeed, be reduced to any phrase—it combines within itself, together with this mystical and awe-struck appeal to the proletariat, a direct and agreeable appeal to such persons as are, by reason of their metaphysical perception and emotional culture, superior to and contemptuous of the proletariat. Fine drama, in truth, is usually just a trifle snobbish. It has no traffic with such souls as are readily to be made to feel "uplifted" by spurious philosophical nostrums and emotional sugar pills. Its business is with what the matchless Dryden hailed "souls of the highest rank and truest understanding": souls

who find a greater uplift in the noble depressions of Brahms' first trio, Bartolommeo's Madonna della Misericordia, and Joseph Conrad's "Youth" than in the easy buoyancies of John Philip Sousa, Howard Chandler Christy and Zane Grey. The aim of great drama is not to make men happy with themselves as they are, but with themselves as they might, yet alas cannot, be. As Gautier has it, "The aim of art is not exact reproduction of nature, but creation, by means of forms and colours, of a microcosm wherein may be produced dreams, sensations, and ideas inspired by the aspect of the world." If drama is irrevocably a democratic art and uplift of the great masses of men its noblest end, Mrs. Porter's "Pollyanna" must endure as a work of dramatic art a thousand times finer than Corneille's "Polyeucte."

Drama has been strictly defined by the ritualists in a dozen different ways. "Drama," says one, "must be based on character, and the action must proceed from character." "Drama," stipulates another, "is not an imitation of men, but of an action and of life: character is subsidiary to action." "Drama," promulgates still another, "is the struggle of a will against obstacles." And so on, so on. Rules, rules and more rules. Pigeon-holes upon pigeon-holes. Good drama is anything that interests an intelligently emotional group of persons assembled together in an illuminated hall. Molière, wise among dramatists, said as much, though in somewhat more, and doubtless too, sweeping words. Throughout the age of drama there will be always Romanticists of one sort or another, brave and splendid spirits, who will have to free themselves from the definitions and limitations imposed upon them by the neo-Bossus and Boileaus, and the jitney Voltaires, La Harpes and Marmontels. Drama is struggle, a conflict of wills? Then what of "Ghosts"? Drama is action? Then what of "Nachtsyl"? Drama is character? Then what of "The Dream Play"? "A 'character' upon the stage," wrote the author of the last named

drama, "has become a creature ready-made—a mere mechanism that drives the man—I do not believe in these theatrical 'characters.'"

Of all the higher arts, drama is perhaps the simplest and easiest. Its anatomy is composed of all the other arts, high and low, stripped to their elements. It is a synthesis of those portions of these other arts that, being elemental, are most easily assimilable on the part of the multitude. It is a snatch of music, a bit of painting, a moment of dancing, a slice of sculpture, draped upon the skeleton of literature. At its highest, it ranks with literature, but never above it. One small notch below, and it ranks only with itself, in its own isolated and generically peculiar field. Drama, indeed, is dancing literature: a hybrid art. It is often purple and splendid; it is often profoundly beautiful and profoundly moving. Yet, with a direct appeal to the emotions as its first and encompassing aim, it has never, even at its finest, been able to exercise the measure of direct emotional appeal that is exercised, say, by Chopin's C sharp minor Nocturne, op. 27, No. 1, or by the soft romance of the canvases of Palma Vecchio, or by Rodin's superb "Eternal Spring," or by Zola's "La Terre." It may, at its finest as at its worst, of course subjugate and triumph over inexperienced emotionalism, but the greatest drama of Shakespeare himself has never, in the truthful confession of cultivated emotionalism, influenced that emotionalism as has the greatest literature, or the greatest music, or the greatest painting or sculpture. The splendid music of "Romeo" or "Hamlet" is not so eloquent and moving as that of "Tristan" or "Lohengrin"; no single situation in the whole of Hauptmann can strike in the heart so thrilling and profound a chord of pity as a single line in Allegri's obvious "Miserere." The greatest note of comedy in drama falls short of the note of comedy in the "Coffee-Cantata" of Bach; the greatest note of ironic remorse falls short of that in the scherzo in B minor of Chopin; the greatest intellectual note

falls short of that in the first and last movements of the C minor symphony of Brahms. What play of Sudermann's has the direct appeal of "The Indian Lily"? What play made out of Hardy's "Tess," however adroitly contrived, retains the powerful appeal of the original piece of literature? To descend, what obvious thrill melodrama, designed frankly for dollars, has—with all its painstaking and deliberate intent—yet succeeded in provoking half the thrill and shock of the obvious second chapter of Andreas Latzko's equally obvious "Men in War"? Art is an evocation of beautiful emotions: art is art in the degree that it succeeds in this evocation: drama succeeds in an inferior degree. Whatever emotion drama may succeed brilliantly in evoking, another art succeeds in evoking more brilliantly.

II

ALTHOUGH, of course, one speaks of drama here primarily in the sense of acted drama, it is perhaps not necessary so strictly to confine one's self. For when the critic confines himself in his discussion of drama to the acted drama, he regularly brings upon himself from other critics—chiefly bookish fellows whose theatrical knowledge is meagre—the very largely unwarranted embarrassment of arguments anent "crowd psychology" and the like which, while they have little or nothing to do with the case, none the less make a certain deep impression upon his readers. (Readers of criticism become automatically critics; with his first sentence, the critic challenges his critic-reader's sense of argument.) This constantly advanced contention of "crowd psychology," of which drama is supposed to be at once master and slave, has small place in a consideration of drama, from whatever sound point of view one elects to consider the latter. If "crowd psychology" operates in the case of theater drama, it operates also in the case of concert-hall music. Yet no one so far as I know seriously maintains that, in a

criticism of music, this "crowd psychology" has any place.

I have once before pointed out that, even accepting the theory of crowd psychology and its direct and indirect implications so far as drama is concerned, it is as nonsensical to assume that one thousand persons assembled together before a drama in a theater are, by reason of their constituting a crowd, any more likely to be moved automatically than the same crowd of one thousand persons assembled together before a painting in an art gallery. Furthermore, the theory that collective intelligence and emotionalism are a more facile and ingenuous intelligence and emotionalism, while it may hold full water in the psychological laboratory, holds little in actual external demonstration, particularly in any consideration of a crowd before one of the arts. While it may be true that the Le Bon and Tarde theory applies aptly to the collective psychology of a crowd at a prize-fight or a bull-fight or a circus, one may be permitted severe doubts that it holds equally true of a crowd in a theater or in an art gallery or in a concert hall. The tendency of such a latter group is not aesthetically downward, but upward. And not only aesthetically, but intellectually and emotionally. (I speak, of course, and with proper relevance, of a crowd assembled to hear good drama or good music, or to see good painting. The customary obscuring tactic of critics in this situation is to argue out the principles of intelligent reaction to good drama in terms of yokel reaction to bad drama. Analysis of the principles of sound theater drama and the reaction of a group of eight hundred citizens of Marion, Ohio, to "The Two Orphans" somehow do not seem to me to be especially apposite.) The fine drama or the fine piece of music does not make its auditor part of a crowd; it removes him, and every one else in the crowd, from the crowd, and makes him an individual. The crowd ceases to exist as a crowd; it becomes a crowd of units, of separate individuals. The dramas of Mr. Owen

Davis make crowds; the dramas of Shakespeare make individuals.

The argument to the contrary always somewhat grotesquely assumes that the crowd assembled at a fine play, and promptly susceptible to group psychology, is a new crowd, one that has never attended a fine play before. Such an assumption falls to pieces in two ways. Firstly, it is beyond reason to believe that it is true in more than one instance out of a hundred; and secondly, it would not be true even if it were true. For, granting that a crowd of one thousand persons were seeing great drama for the first time in their lives, what reason is there for believing that the majority of persons in the crowd who had never seen great drama and didn't know exactly what to make of it would be swayed and influenced by the minority who had never seen great drama but did know what to make of it? If this were true, no great drama could ever possibly fail in the commercial theater. Or, to test the hypothesis further, take it the other way round. What reason is there for believing that the majority in this crowd would be moved the one way or the other, either by a minority that did understand the play, or did not understand it? Or take it in another way still. What reason is there for believing that the minority in this crowd who did know what the drama was about would be persuaded emotionally by the majority who did not know what the drama was about?

Theories, and again theories. But the facts fail to support them. Take the lowest type of crowd imaginable, one in which there is not one cultured man in a thousand—the crowd, say, at a professional American baseball game—and pack it into an American equivalent for Reinhardt's *Grosses Schauspielhaus*. The play, let us say, is "*Edipus Rex*." At the ball game, the crowd psychology of *Le Bon* operated to the full. But what now? Would the crowd, in the theater and before a great drama, be the same crowd? Would it not be an entirely different crowd? Would not its group

psychology promptly and violently suffer a sudden change? Whether out of curiosity, disgust, admiration, social shame or what not, would it not rapidly segregate itself, spiritually or physically, into various groups? What is the *Le Bon* theatrical view of the crowd psychology that somehow didn't come off during the initial engagement of Barrie's "*Peter Pan*" in Washington, D. C.? Or of the crowd psychology that worked the other way round when Ibsen was first played in London? Or of the crowd psychology that, operating regularly, if artificially, at the New York premières, most often fails, for all its high enthusiasm, to move either the minority or the majority in its composition?

The question of sound drama and the pack psychology of a congress of groundlings is a fatuous one: it gets nowhere. Sound drama and sound audiences are alone to be considered at one and the same time. And, as I have noted, the tendency of willing, or even semi-willing, auditors and spectators is in an upward direction, not a downward. No intelligent spectator at a performance of "*Ben Hur*" has ever been made to feel like throwing his hat into the air and cheering by the similar actions of the mob spectators to the left and right of him. No ignoble auditor of "*The Laughter of the Gods*" but has been made to feel, in some part, the contagion of cultivated appreciation to his left and right. "I forget," wrote Sarcey, in a consideration of the subject of which we have been treating, "what tyrant it was of ancient Greece to whom massacres were everyday affairs, but who wept copiously over the misfortunes of a heroine in a tragedy. He was the audience; and for the one evening clothed himself in the sentiments of the public." A typical example of sophisticated reasoning. How does Sarcey know that it was not the rest of the audience—the crowd—that was influenced by this repentant and copiously lachrymose individual, rather than that it was this individual who was moved by the crowd?

If fallacies perchance insinuate themselves into these opposing contentions, it is a case of fallacy versus fallacy: my intent is not so much to prove anything as to indicate the presence of holes in the proofs of the other side. These holes seem to me to be numerous, and of considerable circumference. A description of two of them may suffice to suggest the rest. Take, as the first of these, the familiar Castelvetro doctrine that, since a theatrical audience is not a select congress but a motley crowd, the dramatist, ever conscious of the group psychology, must inevitably avoid all themes and ideas unintelligible to such a gathering. It may be true that a theatrical audience is not a select congress, but why confine the argument to theatrical audiences and seek thus to prove something of drama that may be proved as well—if one is given to such idiosyncrasies—of music? What, as I have said before, of opera and concert hall audiences? Consider the average audience at Covent Garden, the Metropolitan, Carnegie Hall. Is it in any way culturally superior to the average audience at the St. James's Theater, or the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, or the Plymouth—or even the Neighbourhood Playhouse down in Grand Street? What of the audiences who attended the original performances of Beethoven's "Leonore" ("Fidelio"), Berlioz's "Benvenuto Cellini," the original performances of Wagner in France and the performances of his "Der Fliegende Holländer" in Germany, the operas of Händel in England in the years 1733-37, the work of Rossini in Italy, the concerts of Chopin during his tour of England and Scotland? . . . Again, as to the imperative necessity of the dramatist's avoidance of all themes and ideas unintelligible to a mob audience, what of the success among such very audiences of—to name but a few more recent profitably produced and locally readily recognizable examples—Shaw's "Heartbreak House," Augustus Thomas' "The Witching Hour," Ibsen's "The Wild Duck," Dunsany's "The Laughter of the Gods," Barrie's

"Mary Rose," Strindberg's "The Father," Synge's "Playboy"? . . . Surely it will be quickly allowed that however obvious the themes and ideas of these plays may be to the few, they are hardly within the ready intelligence of what the theorists picture as the imaginary mob theater audience. Fine drama is independent of all such theories: the dramatist who subscribes to them should not figure in any treatise upon drama as an art.

A second illustration: the equivocation to the effect that drama, being a democratic art, may not properly be evaluated in terms of more limited, and aristocratic, taste. It seems to me, at least, an idiotic assumption that drama is a more democratic art than music. All great art is democratic in intention, if not in reward. Michelangelo, Shakespeare, Wagner and Zola are democratic artists, and their art democratic art. It is criticism of Michelangelo, Shakespeare, Wagner and Zola that is aristocratic. Criticism, not art, generically wears the ermine and the purple. To appraise a democratic art in terms of democracy is to attempt to effect a chemical reaction in nitrogen with nitrogen. If drama is, critically, a democratic art since it is meant not to be read by the few but to be played before the many, music must be critically no less a democratic art. Yet the theorists conveniently overlook this embarrassment. Nevertheless, if Shakespeare's dramas were designed for the heterogeneous ear, so, too, were the songs of Schumann. No great artist has ever deliberately fashioned his work for a remote and forgotten cellar, dark and stairless. He fashions it, for all his doubts, in the hope of hospitable eyes and ears, and in the hope of a sun to shine upon it. It is as ridiculous to argue that because Shakespeare's is a democratic art it must be criticized in terms of democratic reaction to it as it would be to argue that because the United States is a democracy the most acute and comprehensive criticism of that democracy must lie in a native democrat's reaction to it.

III

"CONVICTIONS," said Nietzsche, "are prisons." Critical "theories," with negligible exception, seek to denude the arts of their splendid, gipsy gauds and to force them instead to don so many duplicated black and white striped uniforms. Of all the arts, drama has suffered most in this regard. Its critics, from the time of Aristotle, have bound and fettered it, and have then urged it impassionedly to soar. Yet, despite its shackles, it has triumphed, and each triumph has been a derision of one of its most famous and distinguished critics. It triumphed, through Shakespeare, over Aristotle; it triumphed, through Molière, over Castelvetro; it triumphed, through Lemerrier, over Diderot; it triumphed, through Lessing, over Voltaire; it triumphed, through Ibsen, over Flaubert; it has triumphed, through Hauptmann, over Sarcey and, through Schnitzler and Bernard Shaw, over Mr. Archer. The truth perhaps is that drama is an art as flexible as the imaginations of its audiences. It is no more to be bound by rules and theories than such imaginations are to be bound by rules and theories. Who so all-wise that he may say by what rules or set of rules living imaginations and imaginations yet unborn are to be fanned into theatrical flame? "Imagination," Samuel Johnson's words apply to auditor as to artist, "a licentious and vagrant faculty, unsusceptible of limitations and impatient of restraint, has always endeavoured to baffle the logician, to perplex the confines of distinction, and burst the inclosures of regularity." And further, "There is therefore scarcely any species of writing of which we can tell what is its essence, and what are its constituents; every new genius produces some innovation which, when invented and approved, subverts the rules which the practice of foregoing authors had established."

Does the play interest, and whom? This seems to me to be the only doctrine of dramatic criticism that is capa-

ble of supporting itself soundly. First, does the play interest? In other words, how far has the dramatist succeeded in expressing himself, and the materials before him, intelligently, eloquently, symmetrically, beautifully? So much for the criticism of the dramatist as an artist. In the second place, whom does the play interest? Does it interest inferior persons, or does it interest cultivated and artistically sensitive persons? So much for the criticism of the artist as a dramatist.

The major difficulty with critics of the drama has always been that, having once positively enunciated their critical credos, they have been constrained to devote their entire subsequent enterprise and ingenuity to defending the fallacies therein. Since a considerable number of these critics have been, and are, extraordinarily shrewd and ingenious men, these defenses of error have often been contrived with such persuasive dexterity and reasonableness that they have endured beyond the more sound doctrines of less deft critics, doctrines which, being sound, have suffered the rebuffs that gaunt, grim logic, ever unprepossessing and unhypnotic, suffers always. "I hope that I am right; if I am not right, I am still right," said Brunetière. "Mr. William Archer is not only, like myself, a convinced, inflexible determinist," Henry Arthur Jones has written, "I am persuaded that he is also, unlike myself, a consistent one. I am sure he takes care that his practice agrees with his opinions—even when they are wrong." Dramatic criticism is an attempt to formulate rules of conduct for the lovable, wayward, charming, wilful vagabond that is the drama. For the drama is an art with a feather in its cap and an ironic smile upon its lips, sauntering impudently over forbidden lawns and through closed lanes into the hearts of those of us children of the world who have never grown up. Beside literature, it is the Mother Goose of the arts: a gorgeous and empurpled Mother Goose for the fireside of impressible and romantic youth that, looking up-

ward, leans ever hushed and expectant at the knee of life. It is a fairy tale told realistically, a true story told as romance. It is the lullaby of disillusion, the chimes without the cathedral, the fears and hopes and dreams and passions of those who cannot fully fear and hope and dream and flame of themselves.

"The drama must have reality," so Mr. P. P. Howe in his engaging volume of "Dramatic Portraits," "but the first essential to our understanding of an art is that we should not believe it to be actual life. The spectator who shouts his warning and advice to the heroine when the villain is approaching is, in the theater, the only true believer in the hand of God; and he is liable to find it in a drama lower than the best." The art of the drama is one which imposes upon drama the obligation of depicting at once the inner processes of life realistically, and the external aspects of life delusively. Properly and sympathetically to appreciate drama, one must look upon it synchronously with two different eyes: the one arguing against the other as to the truth of what it sees, and triumphing over this doubtful other with the full force of its sophistry.

Again inevitably to quote Coleridge, "Stage presentations are to produce a sort of temporary half-faith, which the spectator encourages in himself and supports by a voluntary contribution on his own part, because he knows that it is at all times in his power to see the thing as it really is. Thus the true stage illusion as to a forest scene consists, not in the mind's judging it to be a forest, but in its remission of the judgment that it is not a forest." This obviously applies to drama as well as to dramatic investiture. One never for a moment believes absolutely that Mr. John Barrymore is Richard III; one merely agrees, for the sake of Shakespeare, who has written the play, and Mr. Hopkins, who

has cast it, that Mr. John Barrymore is Richard III, that one may receive the ocular, aural and mental sensations for which one has paid three dollars and a half. Nor does one for a moment believe that Mr. Walter Hampden, whom that very evening one has seen dividing a brobdingnagian dish of goulash with Mr. Oliver Herford in the Players' Club and discussing the prospects of the White Sox, is actually speaking extemporaneously the rare verbal embroideries of Shakespeare; or that Miss Ethel Barrymore, who is billed in front of Browne's Chop House to take a star part in the Actors' Equity Association's benefit, is really the Queen of a distant kingdom.

The dramatist, in the theater, is not a worker in actualities, but in the essence of actualities that filters through the self-deception of his spectators. There is no such thing as realism in the theater: there is only mimicry of realism. There is no such thing as romance in the theater: there is only mimicry of romance. There is no such thing as an automatic dramatic susceptibility in a theater audience: there is only a volitional dramatic susceptibility. Thus, it is absurd to speak of the drama holding the mirror up to nature; all that the drama can do is to hold nature up to its own peculiar mirror which, like that in a pleasure-park carousel, amusingly fattens up nature, or shrinks it, yet does not at any time render it unrecognizable. One does not go to the theater to see life and nature; one goes to see the particular way in which life and nature happen to look to a cultivated, imaginative and entertaining man who happens, in turn, to be a playwright. Drama is the surprising pulling of a perfectly obvious, every-day rabbit out of a perfectly obvious, everyday silk hat. The spectator has seen thousands of rabbits and thousands of silk hats, but he has never seen a silk hat that had a rabbit concealed in it, and he is curious about it.



The South Begins to Mutter

By H. L. Mencken

I

FULL oft in the past I have en-gaused this place with discourses, sometimes almost lyrical, upon the low state of *Kultur* in the late Confederate States of America. A year or so ago, having my book, "Prejudices: Second Series," on the stocks, I redacted all of these belly-achings, joined them neatly together, and turned them into a chapter for the volume, under the title of "The Sahara of the Bozart." That chapter, I regret to say (for in so far as I am an American at all, I am a Southerner, and have a high veneration for the character of General Robert E. Lee), produced a painful impression beyond the Potomac bridges, and brought forth many waspish paragraphs against me in the public press of the region. Several papers hinted broadly that I was at my old trick of sowing dissension in the Republic for the retainer of the Wilhelmstrasse; others, going further, allowed that I was nothing, after all, but a damned Yankee, and probably also an Abolitionist. Such is journalism where the sweet magnolias bloom; of all the intellectual burdens that lie upon the people down there, the worst, I often think, is that of a puerile and black-guard press. But there are Southerners who are infinitely superior to their newspapers, just as there are New Yorkers who are superior (though perhaps not infinitely) to theirs, and from some of these lonely flies in amber I presently began to receive communications. From one faction came protests, usually very polite, that I had been too

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sweeping in my indictment—that the South, though admittedly backward, was by no means wholly asleep—that definite strivings toward things æsthetic, in music, in painting, in architecture and even in letters, were showing themselves in this, that or the other town, despite all the Confederate Veterans, Sons of Veterans, Daughters of the Confederacy, Epworth Leagues, Rotary Clubs, Chambers of Commerce, Odd Fellows, Baptist Synods, Anti-Saloon Leagues, Christian Endeavor Societies, Timrod Clubs, Democratic State Central Committees, and other such soviets of the intellectually unemployed. From the other faction came sad admissions that most of my allegations were true—but always with bold declarations that the thing couldn't and wouldn't go on forever, that something would be done about it, and very soon.

It is a great pleasure to enter upon the record a minute testifying to the *bona fides* of these declarations, as shown by their prompt fulfilment. The South, indeed, begins to show a very respectable fermentation of aspirations, and if all goes well it will soon be producing actual ideas. What is going on down there is almost precisely what went on in the Middle West in the 1890's, to wit, a gathering revolt of the more alert and competent youngsters against the constraints of an ancient, formalized and no longer vital tradition. Just as the Chicago literary Bolsheviks of the *Chap-Book* days rebelled against the hegemony of New England, so the Young South begins to rebel against the cultural dominance of the profes-

sional Confederates, and their commercial patrons and political and theological lackeys. The professional Confederates have paraded their dead brains long enough; they have been in a state of complete mental paralysis since the surrender at Appomattox; what is needed is elbow-room for youngsters whose view of the world, whatever its defects, is at least grounded upon observation of the world—and particularly the sub-Potomac world—as it actually is today. In brief, it is the old war between the Davidsbündler and the Philistines—and the former proceed to the attack in the classical manner. That is to say, they set up *Tendenz* magazines, and announce valiantly that they are done with the past. Three such magazines are already issuing in the South—the *Reviewer* at Richmond, the *Double-Dealer* at New Orleans, and *All's Well* out in trackless, unexplored Arkansas, a state still almost fabulous. (Who, indeed, has ever been in it? I know New Yorkers who have been in Cochin China, Kafristan, Paraguay, Somaliland and West Virginia, but not one who has ever penetrated the miasmatic jungles of Arkansas.) All three (to go back to the magazines) are still somewhat flabby. *All's Well* is sustained by a single man, Charles J. Finger, and I suspect that he is not actually a Southerner. The *Double-Dealer* was launched chiefly by Jews, a people who are always two or three laps ahead of the folks they live among, culturally speaking. Worse, it is very exotic in flavor, and some of its chief contributors are men who have probably never been in the South, or heard of either General Jubal Early or J. Gordon Cooglar. The *Reviewer* is more genuinely Southern. All of its four editors are Richmonders and Christians, and it is given countenance by an advisory board headed by James Branch Cabell, and including practically all the professional authors now in practice in Virginia. Of these journals, the *Double-Dealer* is the most ambitious, *All's Well* shows the greatest sophisti-

cation, and the *Reviewer* has the most authentic native flavor.

II

As I write, the *Reviewer*—which comes out twice a month—has reached its ninth number. It has no endowment, but is wholly sustained by the energies of the four enthusiasts—Emily Clark, Hunter Stagg, Mary D. Street and Margaret Freeman—who edit it. Its contents throw an illuminating light, not only upon the causes of the intellectual stagnation of the South, but also upon the way out. The editors apparently know what sort of stuff they need to break down the old Southern tradition and prepare the path for better things, but either the supply of that stuff is still too short to fill their pages, or they are too cautious to give their readers large doses of it. In one number there is a sardonic essay by Cabell, a devastating attack upon three dunderheads—but all of them Englishmen, all of them safely beyond the sea! In another number comes a hollow, school-girlish essay on Edgar Allan Poe—in which it is solemnly argued that his writings prove him to have been, not the three-bottle man of legend, but an ardent temperance apostle! Here we have, first, a half-way measure of revolt, and then a complete surrender to the Philistines. What the South needs is not an onslaught by Cabell upon the tripe-sellers and cheese-mongers of England, but an onslaught by Cabell upon the tripe-sellers and cheese-mongers of the South, of Virginia, of Richmond itself. And before an intelligent criticism may be set up down there—the one thing absolutely prerequisite to a civilized literature—the old mawkish criticism of talented literary ladies, mush-headed curates and idiotic pedagogues must be put down by *force majeure*, head-long, cruelly, riotously.

In brief, the thing must be done with violence, and without any regard whatever for tender feelings. Every time the battle is stopped for an amiable

square dance, all is lost, including honor. There can be absolutely no compromise between those who stand for sound and honest literature and those who seek to make it a hymn and a sugar-teat. There is no middle ground. Such warfare upon coxcombs and sentimentalists, of course, is not without its perils and its alarms. They are very securely intrenched, particularly in such regions as the South, where they have gone unchallenged for sixty years. They have the mob on their side. They are supported by all the forces of conventional respectability. They have a crafty way of making their antagonists appear ignorant, disingenuous and ignoble. They are without any qualms themselves when it comes to breaking heads. But so much the better. A good fight justifies any cause—and this one is bound to be hot and heavy, and may even, I suppose, have a certain merit in it. Let the merit go, and consider only the sport. What could be more charming than to tackle a gang of schoolmarms, male and female, all dressed up as artists—and haul off their disguises one by one? What could be more exhilarating than the unmasking of one mountebank after another—the sensation of gradual yielding—the slow winning of hard-fought ground? It is combat, the noblest business of man, as of the other mammalia. The crowd, at the start, is with the old stock company—but the crowd is a scoundrel, and has no honor: it will whoop, soon enough, for whoever heaves the old stock company over the footlights. In the long run, there can be no question of the outcome, given the proper weapons for the fray. They must be sharp and reliable. They must be the tried and true weapons of sound information, of common sense, of good taste, of lively wit, of ready humor. They must be wielded savagely, but fairly. There is no room in such a sluggish-match for favorites. Down must go all the softies, Friend Maggie as well as Enemy John.

Here is the opportunity of the *Reviewer*, if the Richmond fog proves

breathable long enough for it to get under way. It is young, it is unhampered by ties, and it shows, beneath all its superficial yieldings, a very palpable discontent with the Southern scene of today. What it lacks so far is the thing that newspaper optimists call punch, *i. e.*, bellicosity, the provocative habit of mind, the will to hammer upon skulls. Its peril is that it may sink into the puerile literary formalism that already curses the South, and so disappear beneath a sea of sweetened bilge. Strong arms already pull it downward; it is being "encouraged" in a very suspicious manner by ladies and gentlemen whose emigration to Lithuania would be the greatest benefit enjoyed by Southern letters since the death of O. Henry. If I were in the confidence of its editors I should advise them to get rid of fully half of their advisers, and then devote nine or ten numbers to exposing them. One Cabell is worth all the other imaginative authors produced by Virginia since the first ship-load of dog-stealers and porch-climbers landed at Jamestown. Though he but recently announced his own literary death and burial, there is still a great deal of steam left in him. To what more stimulating enterprise could he consecrate his senility than to that of clearing off the mouldering tradition that so long denied him recognition at home, even after the abominable Yankee has begun to hurrah for him? Cabell is a sort of salamander, and impervious to his surroundings. For years and years he existed down there like a solitary civilized European in Iowa, or a lone Christian in New York. He is obviously the man around whom the revival of literature in the South, if it is ever to come, must revolve. He is the one writer of his generation—now passing so sadly into rising blood pressures and therapeutic golf—who has never succumbed even transiently to the banal mushiness that has ruined all the rest. If the *Reviewer*, having lured him out of his self-dug grave, can now turn him into a critic, half its battle will be won.

The *Double-Dealer* makes a more oblique attack. Its business is less critical than expository; it seeks to show the Southern literati, not what they might be doing themselves, but what is being done elsewhere. To that end it fills its pages with the work of such men as Lord Dunsany, Arthur Symons, Ben Hecht, Louis Untermeyer, Stephen Ta Van, Padraic Colum and Herman George Scheffauer—largely, it will be noted, importations from the *Smart Set*. This is useful missionarying, for the only Northern magazines that circulate extensively in the South are those which seldom indulge in literature, and there are no doubt thousands of *intelligentsia* below the James who have yet to hear of Joseph Conrad or Anatole France. The women's clubs, which have reached George Bernard Shaw and even Havelock Ellis in the North, are still busy with Agnes Repplier and Frank R. Stockton in the South; if they disdain John Greenleaf Whittier, it is only because he was an Abolitionist. Thus the *Double-Dealer*, if the Baptist parsons do not have it barred from the news-stands as antinomian, will perform a useful service: the discovery that such a man as Alfred Kreymborg exists will shake up Georgia like the news of a two-headed boy. But the main show is to come after all this preliminary parade of foreign devils is over; the *Double-Dealer* will be tested finally by its success in unearthing genuine Southerners with something to say, and by the grace and appositeness of what they utter. It has the right air. It struts a bit, and doesn't give a damn for the old gods. I have read all of its issues diligently, and haven't found a single reference, direct or indirect, to the charm and virtue of Southern womanhood, or to the mad way in which the slaves used to love their masters, or to the strategy of General Stonewall Jackson, or to the lamentable event of April 9, 1865.

All's Well, as I say, is the enterprise of one man, Mr. Finger, and my agents report grave doubts that he is a Southerner. The first entry in his *dossier*, in

fact, shows him sojourning in far-away Patagonia—about which he has written some excellent short-stories—and later on he appears to have lived in Ohio, near Marion, among the Morons, or Latter-Day Saints. His paper must cause a great deal of lifting of eyebrows among the Arkansans, if any of them ever see it. It constantly praises authors whose books would set fire to the Carnegie libraries down there, and in politics it flouts the idealism of Woodrow. Lately, poisoned by the bad water of the region, Mr. Finger has been giving space to an Indiana genius, sponsored by Dreiser, who has amassed proofs that Shakespeare was neither Bacon nor the Stratford butcher's son, but some literary Elizabethan whose name I forget. Such bosh is almost Southern.

III

WHAT ails the South is a very simple thing: it is still suffering from the *débâcle* of fifty-six years ago. That *débâcle* almost obliterated civilization in the whole region, and so the surviving Confederates took to sentimentalizing the civilization that had collapsed and departed. That sentimentalization, in the end, became a sort of sacred duty, a benevolent mania, a furious and unintelligible cult, and the Southerner himself a walking sarcophagus of dead ideas. To question any article of the Confederate code, however trivial, came to be regarded as a sin against the Holy Ghost. Any man who refused to swallow the whole mess of balderdash was a scoundrel. Such habits of wholesale and uncritical assent, of course, are extremely dangerous. The believing mind, once it gets into operation, demands ever increasing doses of piffle. In the South all sorts of asses took advantage of this fact—politicians, economic soothsayers, professors of the negro problem, uplifters of forty varieties, the ignorant and bombastic clergy of all the low-brow sects. The result was that human thought in the whole region was reduced to a mere poll-parrotting of formulæ. The Southerner became the

most idiotic patriot ever heard of in terrestrial history. Everything Southern took on sacrosanctity in his eyes, from the swinish politics of the job-seekers who herded the cracker and Confederate veteran vote to the barbaric theology of the Methodist and Baptist dervishes, and from the pious nonsense of the roving Prohibitionists, free silver fanatics and generalized chautauquans to the revolting indecencies of the Southern cotton-mill owners. All conceivable human problems were precipitated into platitudes. To question these platitudes became downright dangerous to life and limb.

Obviously, there was no room in such a *Kultur* for the artist. The artist is never a sentimental apologist for his time; he is always a rebel against his time. The very impulse that differentiates him from the general run of men is an impulse to create an imaginary world that is better than the real world that satisfies them in their stupidity and sloth; he is a sort of evil conscience to his generation. Art, in brief, is not a mere representation of life; above all, it is not a ratification of life; it is preeminently a criticism of life, an indictment of life—often in harsh terms. Such criticism was simply prohibited by the childish philosophy that had seized the South. Enormously sensitive to Northern contempt and reproach, and gradually falling under the cultural dominance of a bumptious and ignorant class that, before the War, had been but little raised above the negroes, it frantically stamped out every sign of dissent and revolt. Southern education became a barren inculcation of tosh; Southern politics became a mere mouthing of shibboleths; Southern public opinion, led by a singularly incompetent press and largely colored by the rantings of a degraded clergy, became plain silliness. The literature produced under such conditions was inevitably anæmic and childish. Debarred from a realistic consideration of the here and now, it looked back wistfully toward the Golden Age or spent itself upon hollow sentimentalities. It touched its heights in

the pretty verses of Frank L. Stanton and the mawkish fiction of Henry Synnor Harrison. Whatever of a better sort was done in the South—for example, "The Southerner," by the late Walter H. Page, and the work of Cabell—was done, as it were, by chance and stealth, and the South took no notice of it. As for the other arts, they simply did not exist.

The South was, and is, by no means illiterate. I receive manuscripts from most of the Southern states every week—from some of them every day—and these manuscripts often show all the surface signs of competence. But within they are almost invariably hollow: the view of the world that they reveal, and particularly of the Southern world, is naïve and stupid. They never depict the human comedy shrewdly, sharply and accurately; they depict it in terms of childish conventions. I proceed to a concrete example. The South, like all other backward regions, is intensely religious, and in the average town down there the local evangelical divines—often plow-hands raised to the black gown by way of camp-meetings—are important persons. Their notions of the correct in conduct are gravely accepted by everyone; their crude, niggerish theology is not challenged; their personalities are fascinating to their followers. Well, it is very common to encounter a Southern short-story manuscript that deals with the clownish activities and banal aspirations of such gentlemen of God—and always they are depicted quite seriously, always it is accepted as a fact that they are genuinely distinguished men, and credible to the society which supports them. It is my contention that a sound artist could not conceivably look at them in that way—that he would inevitably penetrate to their triviality, and so depict them, not as prophets and ambassadors of Christ, but as the brummagem mountebanks that they are. They stand for a view of life that is irrevocably opposed to the æsthetic view; they are no more civilized, in any real sense, than a Southern cotton-mill sweater or profes-

sional politician is civilized. The true artist is instinctively against all such hoofers of beauty and decency, and when he deals with them he can't help showing it. He may depict them with understanding and even with sympathy, but it is impossible to imagine him depicting them with approbation. He recognizes them instantly as his enemies, just as they recognize him as theirs. For it is his prime function in life, not to ratify what the vast, swinish masses of men do and believe in, but to imagine deeds that are nobler and thoughts that are more profound.

IV

THE artist's discharge of this function—often, alas, it is beyond him, and he gets no further than a gallant trying—explains the evil repute that he enjoys among ordinary men. They dislike him, not, as he often assumes, because they envy him his talents, for they often, in point of fact, deny him any talents whatever, but simply because they sense his opposition to all the ideas that soothe and content them in their wallow, and so make them feel safe. The artist is, in the highest sense, a public enemy; *vox populi*, to him, is the bray of an ass; what ordinary men respect and venerate is his predestined target. He is on dangerous ground whenever he tries to conceal the fact, and especially when he tries to conceal it from himself. Popularity is the one siren that he can never afford to trifle with; compromise is the one weakness that he must guard against incessantly. His best work is always done in conscious revolt against the culture that surrounds him, and in conscious conflict with the majority that regards it with satisfaction. He is an anarchist, or he is nothing.

This fact is obvious enough, God knows, and yet it often goes unnoticed. It explains many aesthetic phenomena of recent years, at home and abroad. The war-time was marked, in all countries, by a tremendous development of cultural self-consciousness and national complacency. The whole world, flogged

to insanity, took a header into the intellectual bog so long inhabited by the ex-Confederates; Englishmen, Germans, Russians, Frenchmen and Americans began talking and thinking like Mississippians and Georgians. The great masses of men thus found their everyday sentimentalities strongly reinforced, and in many countries, notably the United States, they even undertook to make it a crime to challenge them. The effect upon artists, as upon all other intellectuals, was disastrous. Some of them, a bit wobbly in the head, honestly succumbed to the emotional contagions of the day, and abandoned their habitual skepticism for the infantile cocksureness of the mob. Others, somewhat less naïve, permitted themselves to be converted by superior force—that is, they joined the mob against sense and decency, not by conviction but by mere policy. But whatever the route of those who fell, it was a smash indeed, and not many of them have recovered from it, or will ever recover from it. The war simply sifted out the weaklings, and left them on the beach. For a glorious moment they were almost as popular as so many revivalists, movie actors or pugilists, but when the mob forgot them and went back to its accustomed idols they were seen to be extinct. Today they find themselves disdained by the only sort of opinion that a self-respecting artist could conceivably seek to enlist on his side. They betrayed the confidence of that sort of opinion, and they are paying for it.

The case of Kipling illustrates the point. The man, in his moments, is unquestionably a first rate artist; it would be silly to deny the fine quality of some of his poetry, and even of some of his prose. But he is also the grandson of a non-conformist soul-saver, and so there is a touch of the shoddy in him. The war brought it out. Throwing overboard all sense and dignity, he became a mere brawling, blathering super-patriot—an extravagant clown indistinguishable from Northcliffe, Bottomley or Lloyd-George. The thing made him enormously popular; the sales of his

books increased vastly; he almost became one of the heroes of the war. But instantly it was over, it was seen that he had collapsed as artist, and now no competent person looks for him to do first-rate work hereafter. In the United States, and in all the other warring countries, exactly the same thing happened. Certainly no one would argue, for example, that such men as Dr. Henry van Dyke, William Allen White and Owen Wister are regarded as seriously today as they were before they began ranting in the manner of the Creel Press Bureau; White, indeed, has publicly confessed their collapse. But the men who kept their heads while the band played—the men who refused, despite the wild emotions of the time, to acquiesce for an instant in the national claim to moral, political, theological, military and cultural superiority and impeccability—these men nearly all went ahead. The whole history of the war period, indeed, is a history of the subsidence of the van Dykes and the rise of the Cabells, Dreisers, Masterses, Andersons and Sinclair Lewises—in brief, of the men who continued to question the national culture, despite the colossal effort to endow it with a mystical sort of perfection. The war made literary history—and very rapidly. It was the intellectual downfall of the old guard that opened the way for the new men. In the midst of the blather it seemed that their cause was hopeless, but the moment the uproar ceased it was seen that they had won.

So in the other countries. Think of Barbusse, Rolland and Duhamel in France. Go back. Think of Goethe.

V

THE ex-Confederates, in the past, have been all Kiplings and Wisters—all, that is, save Cabell and a few others, most of them escaped to the North. In the overwhelming main, they still run with the mob. In depicting the civilization of their land, such as it is, they deal with it sentimentally and approvingly—sometimes, indeed, with charm-

ing innocence, as if quite unable to imagine any better. They will get nowhere until they put away that puerility. They must question it sharply and a bit raucously, and try to visualize something superior to it. They must throw away the powder-puff, and take up the ax. Thackeray is the model for them, not the Walter Scott who, by Mark Twain's celebrated theory, ruined them. Let them read Hardy, Zola, Ibsen, Anatole France, Sudermann, Thomas Mann, George Moore, Shaw, Bennett, the Russians. Let them, coming nearer home, give diligent study to the methods of Dreiser, Anderson, Miss Cather, Herrick, their own Cabell, Hergesheimer, Frank Norris, Ambrose Bierce. Mere skill at writing will not get them very far. At best, it will make them competent folk-singers and folk-storytellers, of the calibre, say, of James Whitcomb Riley and the aforesaid Scott. But there are reaches of literature far beyond that, and in order to enter them they must throw off their old timorousness and mawkishness, and their old worship of a dead past, and their silly acceptance of all the platitudes that move the common man to tears.

Part of their backwardness, I dare say, has been produced by mere isolation. They have not been in sufficient contact with the works and ways of artists in more hospitable climes. Here is where such enterprises as that carried on by the *Double-Dealer* will help them. It is introducing them, at close range, to the sort of ideas that, in the long run, must deliver them. More, it is encouraging them directly to revolt. "It is high time," it says in a recent number, "for some doughty, clear-visioned penman to emerge from the sodden marshes of Southern literature. We are sick to death of the treacly sentimentalities with which our well-intentioned lady fictioneers regale us. The old traditions are no more. New peoples, new customs prevail. The Confederacy has been long since dissolved." High words. Sound sense. Now let the *Double-Dealer* dredge the swamps and find the Moses.

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